PRIVATE EYE

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Friday
13 Nov. '98

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LABOUR: EVERYONE OUT!

INSIDE
No mention of Peter Mandelson's homosexuality

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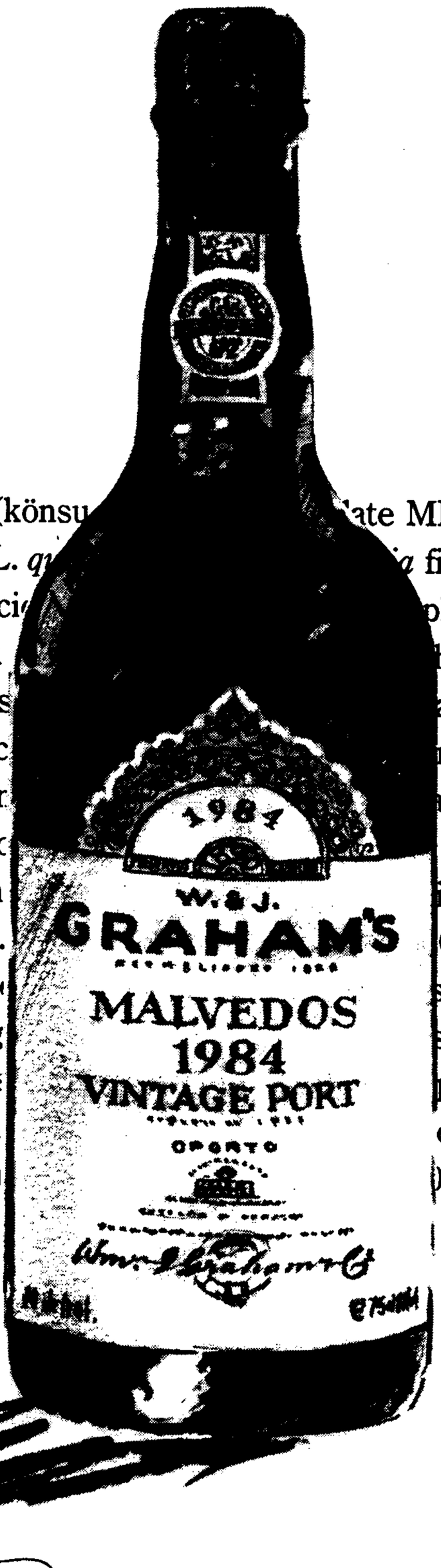

Consummate (könsu…ate ME. [- Fr. *quintessence*, *†quinte essence* - med.L. *qu*…*a* fifth essence.] **1.** The 'fifth essence' of anci…phy, supposed to be the substance of which …heavenly bodies were composed. **2.** The mos…art of any substance; a highly refined essenc…n older chemistry, an alcoholic tincture obtair…t 1576. **b.** The purest or most perfect form c… quality 1570. **c.** The most perfect embodim…ies of a certain class of persons, etc. 1590. …Consummate; of the highest perfection or c…ss. **e.** Impeccable; not liable to sin; (of thing…ss. **f.** Sublime; exalted surpassing, so impress…pire awe or wonder. **Quintessence** *n.* Th… est or most perfect form or manifestatio…). **Quintesse-ntial** *a.*

The Quintessential Port.

THE DAILY
Gnome

HOW MANY MORE OF THEM ARE THERE?

EVERYONE is entitled to their private life, but the public also has a right to know about the nature of the men that they have elected to govern them.

That is why, following the extraordinary revelation that the Prime Minister and a number of his colleagues are active heterosexuals, the Gnome demands to know:

WHO ARE THE STRAIGHT MAFIA?

How many more ministers will be discovered walking around in public places with their wives and children? How many more accounts will we have to read of ministers taking their wives out for "dinner" in brightly lit venues during the early evening? How many more blackmailers will come forward with unpleasant stories of "hetero" relationships involving straight sex?

Come on, Mr Blair, tell us now who they are — or we'll find out and print their names anyway. "The truth will be outed."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"What the Welsh Assembly needs now to capture the public imagination is, of course, for Ron Davies to get caught with his trousers down. Surely Wales can't ride on the reputation of just Lloyd George for another millennium?"

— Anna Morrell, *Western Mail*, 26 September 1998.

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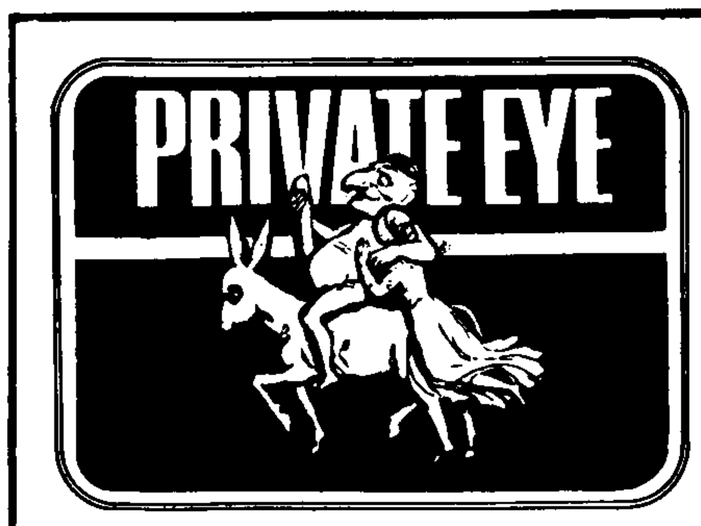

COLOUR SECTION

IN THE TEAROOM

GOVERNMENT fury erupted last week at the appalling intrusiveness of the tabloid press into its European policy. As far as Downing Street is concerned, whether cabinet ministers are or are not confirmed emuphiles, or even federasts, is a private matter and newspaper muckraking is both unwelcome and unwarranted.

Though the spinners conceded that CBI conferences are notorious cruising grounds where politicians have to take special care not to be mugged or taken hostage, lobby hacks were instructed that Peter Mandelson's ambiguous "when not if" statement was simply an "error of judgement" and things should be left at that. No conceivable public interest could be served by probing into the details of what Mandy or chancellor Gordon Brown may be up to behind closed doors.

Labour's backbenchers were promptly signalled to the effect that both errant ministers had received an almighty bollocking from Tony for changing policy on the hoof. Untrue. They were just given an ever-so-gentle reminder of the presentational downside of coming clean.

The truth is, of course, that Blair is no less keen than they are to get us into the Euro but doesn't want media barons campaigning against him before the next general election. Nor does he want to hand the Tories an issue to fight on. His chosen strategy is, therefore, to stonewall any inquiries into his own orientation on the single currency. Or, as one mouthpiece tactlessly put it at the height of last week's outings: "He'll be buggered rather than be bounced into an early referendum."

'Urquhart'

● *More HP — Welsh Leaks page 8*

EVERYONE agrees with Tony Blair's support for his agriculture minister Nick Brown against his "outing" by the *News of the World*. But can Brown expect the same support over his associations with Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall, recently reinstated as directors of Newcastle United after their fall from grace in a Spanish brothel earlier this year?

Brown is a devoted supporter of Shepherd's company's massive supermarket development at Walkergate in his Newcastle East constituency. The development, which now proposes to cover 30,000 acres (compared to 80,000 acres when first mooted) is not very popular in the area and is being considered by John Prescott's department of the environment, transport and the regions.

Meanwhile in Doncaster Douglas Hall is the inspiration behind a huge £200m development of golf courses, houses and shops which was approved by Doncaster council, knocked back by a ministry inspector under the Tory government, and is now likely to be the subject of judicial review on the application of the developers.

In Doncaster, the Labour party was last year subjected to unfortunate revelations in the *Yorkshire Post* which resulted in several suspensions and resignations. As part of "new" Labour's resolve to "root out what's rotten in Old Labour", the regional party, which covers both Newcastle and Doncaster, set up an inquiry. The chairman of the inquiry team was Kevan Jones, chief whip of the council at Newcastle and close personal friend of Nick Brown, who at the time of the inquiry was Labour's chief whip in the Commons.

Like his friend and mentor Nick Brown, Mr Jones is a strong supporter of the Walkergate development in Newcastle. To complete the picture, Brown's deputy as Labour's Commons chief whip was Kevin Hughes, MP for Doncaster North.

One of the first acts of the new inquiry was to reinstate Doncaster councillor John Quinn who had been suspended last November. Coun Quinn represents the Rossington ward, which lies at the centre of the proposed development.

● *More Footnotes pages 26, 27*

FORMER Welsh secretary Ron Davies has strenuously denied that drugs or sex were involved in his late-night encounter with a black man on Clapham Common. This is true in the sense that no drugs were consumed and no sex took place — but not, in the case of the latter, for want of trying.

In the evening of Monday 26 October, a south London crack dealer and pimp with the street name of "Boogie" was minding his own business on a road by Clapham Common when he noticed a car he had seen in the area before pull up. The driver (Ron Davies) beckoned him over. Boogie inquired if he would like to buy some crack. Ron declined. Boogie then asked if he would like a woman. Ron declined this offer, too, but said he did want "somebody" — a male black body, to be precise. Boogie made it clear that his own body was not for sale, but agreed to find Ron a black male prostitute in return for a fee.

Boogie then accompanied Ron to a block of flats in Somerleyton Road, Brixton, in search of the gay prostitute. As they got into the lift they chanced to meet two other black men known to Boogie. As they went up in the lift what had hitherto been a business transaction quickly turned into a robbery.

The lift descended without the gay prostitute having been troubled, and Ron was driven to a cashpoint machine where he told his persecutors he could not remember his PIN number. At this point he was relieved of his wallet, mobile phone and car, and left at the roadside. He went to the police; meanwhile the robbers examined their loot and discovered from papers in the boot that their victim was an MP — up to that point they had not had a clue who he was.

In the course of the night Ron received at least one call at home, made on his own mobile, attempting to blackmail him. He was told to return to Clapham Common with £1,000 on Tuesday lunchtime. This he did not do, having already met Tony Blair on Tuesday morning, given him a very incomplete version of events and resigned.

No doubt the terrifying nature of the whole experience led Ron Davies to make a number of seriously misleading statements to the police. For instance, "Boogie" is not 50, as asserted by Ron, but in his thirties; and of course no woman was involved at any stage. Still, it was dark...

● *Hackwatch on a hack watcher* 7
● *Clarkson in bottom gear* 10
● *Pinochet's PR guru, World of Hype* 11
● *Poetry in Motion? Literary Review* 25
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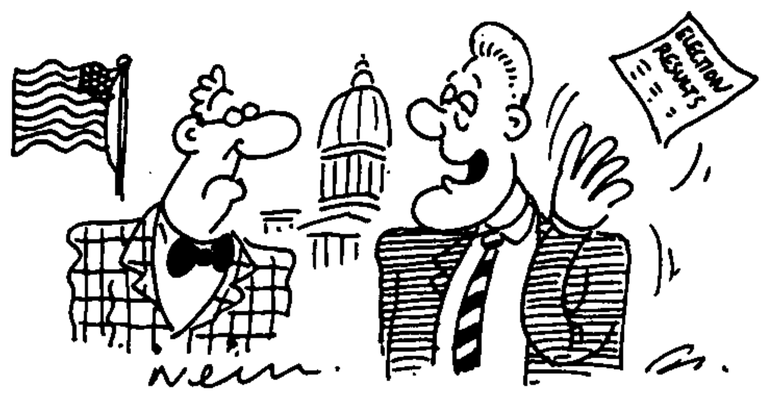


"Yep, it's the Land of the Scot Free!"

NEWS

PENNY Junor's biography of Prince Charles gushed that the future king is a man "who cares about the disadvantaged, the sick and dying". But Charles's charity Business in the Community (BITC) doesn't seem to reflect this image.

BITC's mantra is that "corporate community involvement" is not "an essentially charitable activity" — which is lucky given some of the BITC board members.

Sandy Leitch, of British American Financial Services (known to most through its trading arm Allied Dunbar), is one of the vice chairs. Its biggest contribution to the community has been to rip off thousands of public sector workers in the great pensions mis-selling scandal. The pension companies are supposed to be clearing up the mess after being "named and shamed" by the treasury. But the companies have become involved in a new scandal affecting up to 70,000 victims.

Unable to sell whole pensions to workers in company schemes, the pension companies have started selling top-ups to existing schemes. Prudential (chairman Peter Davis: BITC chairman) and Allied Dunbar are leaders in selling the "Free-standing Voluntary Contributions" schemes. They are free only in the sense of being free of benefits to be gained by topping up existing company schemes. But they do involve giving lots of administration fees and juicy commissions to Peter, Sandy and their friends.

Graham Hawker, meanwhile, is chair of BITC Wales and also of Welsh utility giant Hyder. The company's practice of fixing the electricity meters of those who owe water bills so they turn over quicker to recover the debt was condemned by the Citizens Advice Bureau as "immoral". Peter Mandelson, industry secretary, has instructed electricity regulator Stephen Littlechild to investigate the legality of a practice which falls so heavily on "some of the least well off in society".

But Prince Charles's BITC pals *are* admired by some — like Tony Blair. British American Financial Services are one of "new" Labour's sponsors. Peter Davis has been given a job running Labour's "New Deal". And Hawker has been put in charge of the "New Deal" in Wales and given a seat on the court of the Bank of England. Hawker's firm has also just been awarded a £125m contract by the Welsh office to extend the A55 in a consortium with Tarmac and Laing.

IN THE summer of last year, after complaints from workers at Sainsbury's Houndmills depot near Basingstoke, the *Eye* asked the firm about the safety of fork lift trucks at the depot.

A deluge of faxes and calls from Sainsbury's high-powered publicity machine assured us that the standards of safety in the plant (and the treatment of trades unionists there) were of the highest order.

Last October, an inquest jury was stunned by the evidence about Houndmills depot worker Maurice Disney who died in agony when his forklift truck crushed him against a wall. They brought in a verdict of unlawful killing.

Basingstoke council prosecuted Sainsbury's under health and safety at work laws, and the case came to Winchester crown court this month. Mr Justice Kay said he was shocked by the evidence that the safety switches had been turned off in at least half the depot's trucks. He imposed a record fine: £425,000, plus £75,000 costs.

That sounds a lot — but it's not as much as the £2m Sainsbury's chairman at the time of the accident, Lord Sainsbury, gave to the Labour party before the last election. Lord Sainsbury is now minister of state for trade in the Labour government.

GAY activist Peter Tatchell is losing friends fast among the gay lobby.

Following the Commons vote in favour of lowering the age of consent for gays to 16 (subsequently overturned by the Lords) Tatchell loudly proclaimed that OutRage would push on to get the age of consent lowered to 14 — an issue particularly close to "Satchel's" heart.

Most other gay activists believe such a demand has no chance of success and will only alienate otherwise sympathetic people. At a meeting last month, OutRage members voted to drop the sex-at-14 campaign, despite protests from their leader.

STREET OF SHAME

NO ONE was more indignant at Matthew Parris's "outing" of Peter Mandelson than *News of the World* columnist Richard Stott. "What Parris did was contemptible and hypocritical," he thundered. "What business is it of his whether Mandelson is or isn't?"

He forgot to add that Mandelson was first outed as a homosexual as long ago as 1987. And which paper took that "contemptible" step? The *News of the Screws*, of course.

READERS of the *Sunday Times* magazine on 1 November might have been surprised to find a devastating refutation of the long-running scare about whooping-cough vaccine. Health reporter Brian Deer, setting out to explode the "myth" that whooping-cough jabs can cause brain damage, blamed "newspaper campaigns" in the 1970s for frightening parents off having their babies inoculated.

Could these possibly be the same newspaper campaign for which the *Sunday Times* won a clutch of awards and a boost in circulation? Oddly enough, Brian Deer's otherwise exhaustive investigation did not say.

DESPITE Rosie Boycott's efforts to modernise the *Express* — as her dear friend Tony Blair did with Labour — the cultural divide between Old Hacks and New Hacks at the Grey Lubyanka is still as wide as the Grand Canyon.

One fine specimen of Old Hackery, football editor Rob Shepherd, was invited to dine at Rosie's house recently, where fellow-guests celebrated the paper's earnest new concern for young mothers, the Third World, etc etc. "What the *Express* really needs," he eventually butted in, "is more glitz, more glamour. We need a superb showbiz editor."

One of Rosie's *protegés*, the magnificently camp John Lyttle, looked puzzled. "But I am the showbiz editor," he pointed out.

"Ah yes," said Shepherd. "But are you really *in charge*? Are you the guv'nor?"

"Well," Lyttle riposted, rather hurt by the aspersion. "I may not be the guv'nor, but I am the queen."

Missing Pages

Western Daily Press:

There were no missing pages on Friday or Saturday.

On Monday, page 32 (Where are they now?) was missing.

Internal Memo, Bristol Evening Post

THE Observer wooed foodies recently with a special promotion.

Week one offered fantastic discounts at six London restaurants — "a gourmet meal for £10" — and week two included a free special edition of the respected Harden's London restaurant guide "exclusive to the Observer".

Readers keen to scoff a "gourmet" meal for a tenner naturally turned to their free copy of Harden's for help in choosing which restaurant to go to. Curiously none of the restaurants featured in the promotion appeared in the free guide. But they were reviewed in the unabridged version of Harden's available in bookshops — and the reviews may have caused some confusion.

For instance, the Observer puffs the restaurant Putney Bridge thus: "The style of the cooking is powerful and simple with an imaginative twist". Harden's is less complimentary. Putney Bridge is "an overpriced disgrace" with "terrible cooking and service".

The much-hyped Novelli in Clerkenwell — "spacious" according to the Obs — is "cramped and crowded" according to Harden. And so on: Nico Central in Great Portland Street serves "French cuisine of the highest quality" (Observer) or "unimaginative Gallic fare served slowly and inattentively" (Harden's). Cafe Lazeez in the Old Brompton Road has a "modern menu of exciting and innovative dishes" (Observer) but is "usually not good value" (Harden's).

NEW LOOK QUEEN Pt 94

"CHRIS EVANS's accusation that cocaine snorting is rife at Radio 1 is regarded as rich by those who have had dealings with Virgin Radio," veteran hack Chris Hutchins writes indignantly in pisspoor *Punch*. "They reckon his station makes a bigger contribution to the Colombian industry than it does to the British radio authority."

And who better to express spluttering outrage on the subject than Chris Hutchins, no stranger to the old nasal refreshment himself? Strangely his own prodigious contribution to "the Colombian industry" is left unmentioned.

EX-*Sunday Express* editor Sue Douglas held a small soirée at The Ivy to introduce her new boss, Bob Guccione, owner of the lad mag *Gear*, to a "select" bunch of UK hacks.

She probably wishes she left at least one name off her list: that of feature writer Cosmo Landesman, who started to slate the *Guardian*'s media section, complaining how awful it had become since John Mulholland left.

The new man in charge, Kamal Ahmed, was far too fluffy, Landesman asserted, filling the media section with silly TV stories. "Do you agree?" he asked blithely, turning to the man eating next to him.

"Hardly," said his fellow diner. "I am Kamal Ahmed."

THE *News of the Screws* blew a gasket last month when it learned that *Father Ted* actor Ardal O'Hanlon was appearing at an event to raise money for the defence of Danny McNamee, who was convicted of the Hyde Park bombing in 1982 but has always protested his innocence.

"*Father Ted* Star Fights to Free IRA Fiend Who Did This", screamed a headline alongside a picture of the Hyde Park carnage. An accompanying article by young Alexander Hitchen (son of Brian "Mussolini" Hitchen) slammed the comedian's "sick fund-raising show".

The story also appeared in the Irish edition of the *Screws* — but in rather different form. "*Father Ted* Star Bids to Win Freedom for Convicted IRA Bomber: New Tests Prove He Didn't Do It," the paper declared, revealing that "startling forensic evidence, which was hidden at the original trial, could soon set McNamee free".

Who wrote this remarkably sympathetic article, which effectively repudiated Alexander Hitchen's hysterical smear-job in the English edition? Step forward, er, Alexander Hitchen.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The launch of a high-powered campaign to sell the single currency to the British public has been cancelled... The role being played by Lord Hollick, the campaign co-ordinator, is attracting criticism from ministers."

— *Sunday Telegraph*, 8 November 1998.

"An *Express on Sunday* poll showed a dramatic shift in public opinion towards the Euro. According to our survey — which is the most thorough ever conducted on attitudes to the single currency — nearly nine out of 10 voters now believe that scrapping the pound is inevitable."

— *Express on Sunday*, 8 November 1998 [part of United News and Media, run by Lord Hollick].

ANDREW GOLDEN, formerly of the *Sunday Mirror*, was one of the last trade union reps at the Mirror Group and so, despite a long record as much-published political writer and loyalty to the management, he had to go.

When he wrote a mild letter to David Montgomery, the group's chief executive, asking about the latter's preposterous "school of excellence", he was sacked, along with his deputy Bob Bayliss.

Unusually he took his case to the high court, where damages are large. He quickly disposed of the *Mirror*'s claim that he was incompetent by writing and getting published two pieces in the *News of the World*. The *Mirror*'s original determination to fight the action through to the end was weakened by the appearance of two unexpected names on the witness lists for Golden: Heidi Kingston and Amanda Platell.

Kingston was of course married to Montgomery and Platell became his managing editor when he took over as chief executive in 1992. Both women had rather a lot to say about Montgomery's approach to trade union representatives in the *Mirror* — revelations which might not have sounded very appropriate from the chief executive of Labour-supporting newspapers.

Not long after the names appeared, the action was settled out of court. The details are secret but the *Eye* can reveal that the payment to Golden was historic — not a million pounds short of £180,000.

Number crunchings

THERE HAVE BEEN
4 month prison sentences
3 pages of outraged coverage in the Daily Mail
2 hundred hours of community service plus fines, and
1 full scale review of police procedure as a result of police brutality to dogs

THERE HAVE BEEN
NO prison sentences, pages of outraged coverage in Daily Mail, fines, community service or reviews of procedure as a result of police brutality to humans

***TORYGRAPH* writer Tom Utley faced a barrage of criticism after he wrote his comment piece on how "I find public displays of sexual desire between members of the same sex distasteful".**

Utley didn't stop there but also told *Telegraph* readers that he finds male homosexuals prone to "cattiness, selfishness, promiscuity and cowardice". The last jibe struck a chord with *Torygraph* secretarial staff the following day when they had to screen angry calls from members of the public... because a trembling Utley declined speaking to his detractors.

Worst of all, Utley whined, was the fact that he had only written the piece as a way of avoiding writing what his bosses on the comment pages had asked for: a worthy essay of the pros and cons of proportional representation in the light of the Jenkins report.

HACKWATCH

Roy Greenslade

IN 1990 Roy Greenslade accepted the editorship of the *Daily Mirror*, laughing off warnings from his friends that Robert Maxwell was an autocratic bully. "I could not imagine him being as heavy-handed as people claimed," he wrote. Fourteen months later he was abruptly sacked.

Since then Greenslade has earned a living as the *Guardian*'s resident "media expert". Some may wonder about the expertise of a man who can't even recognise a megalomaniac monster at 20 paces, but his record speaks for itself:

8 June 1998: Four days ago, when David Yelland was named as the new editor of the *Sun*, Greenslade informed *Guardian* readers that Murdoch "might have made a mistake". Now, however, he reveals that Yelland "will prove an excellent choice".

15 June: Following the death of Sir David English, editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers, Greenslade peers into his crystal ball. "Though Rothermere's intentions are unfathomable, I cannot imagine him creating an editor-in-chief in the coming months."

6 July: After "careful analysis", Greenslade decides that it would be most unfair to introduce legal curbs on the Dirty Digger. "Nor," he adds, "do I believe any longer that his price-cutting at the *Times* and the *Sun* can be viewed as predatory." Can this be the same Roy Greenslade who has long campaigned for a law to stop Murdoch's predatory pricing? Er, yes: as he explains: "I have changed my mind."

8 July: The one thing on which Greenslade never changes his mind is the magnificence of the new government. Today he is ecstatic at the "jolly good appointment" of Blair crony Gerry Robinson as head of the Arts Council. "Gerry Robinson brings to the post not only a necessary understanding of corporate culture but a personal enthusiasm for the arts which his detractors have been scandalously eager to belittle... The Robinson chairmanship is truly a breath of fresh air."

15 July: The fuss about "new" Labour cronyism and cash-for-access is "really too much to bear" for the sensitive Greenslade. "Let's get things in perspective," he huffs. "It is important that we know about these shenanigans and also important that Blair deals with it, as he has pledged to do... But to try to implicate Blair or, for that matter, the minister without portfolio, Peter Mandelson, in dirty deeds just ain't on."

20 July: Whoops! Paul Dacre has been made editor-in-chief of Associated Newspapers, thus scuppering Greenslade's prediction that such an appointment was unimaginable. But this doesn't stop him from venturing another well-informed forecast: "Rumours that Dacre will stalk the corridors of Kensington swinging an axe appear to be greatly exaggerated. So we can discount reports of the imminent demise of *Mail on Sunday* editor Jonathan Holborow..."

3 August: Greenslade pens a long profile of *Sunday Telegraph* editor Dominic Lawson. "Whatever you do, Roy, please don't say he's a lovely man," a hack urges him. "A lot of people at the paper won't agree with you." But Greenslade chooses to ignore the advice. As he explains: "I have always been friendly with Lawson, have occasionally written for him, have given him advice when asked, and have always enjoyed his company." So that's all right, then.

17 August: Greenslade deplores the "acres of space" still devoted to the Princess of Wales: "No day passes without a Diana headline. Papers go on concocting reasons to carry stories about her..." Such as his own piece, perhaps, which appears as a "six-page special" marking the first anniversary. "Since you are bound to mention it," he tells *Grauniad* readers, "I readily concede that by writing this article I can be accused of indulging in the very practice I am decrying." But he has a ready answer: "So be it."

7 September: Following Lord Rothermere's death, Greenslade again dismisses gossip that Paul Dacre will get rid of *Mail on Sunday* editor Jonathan Holborow. Dacre, we are told, "is unlikely to do anything hasty". Dacre duly gets rid of Holborow two weeks later.

12 October: Greenslade has been changing his mind once more, this time about the *Mirror*. At first he thought that the choice of Piers Morgan as editor "seemed a bad one", and that the 1997 redesign was a fatal mistake. "In fact, the circulation statistics now show that it was more successful than I originally thought."

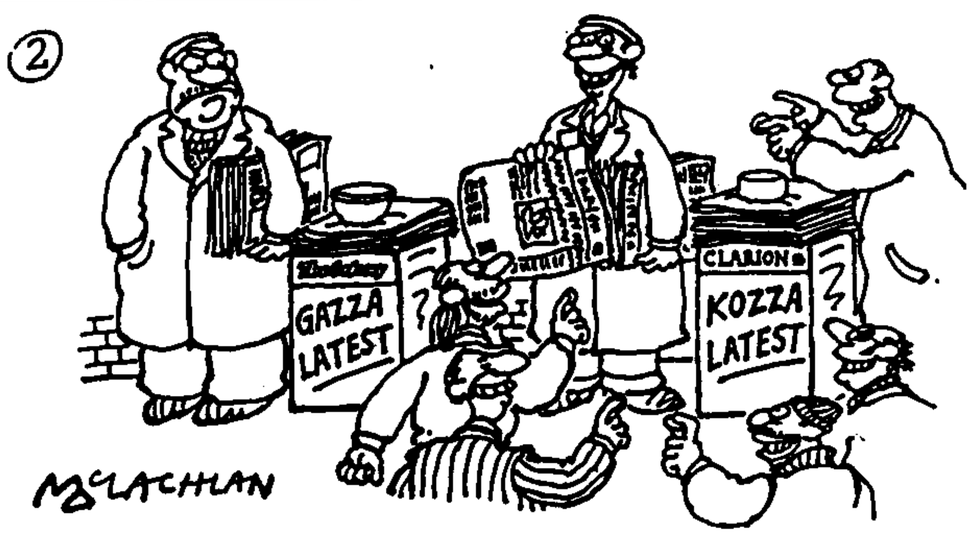
19 October: Another week, another *mea culpa*. Following the resignation of the *Daily Star*'s editor, Greenslade notes that the paper "remains profitable, providing a vital 20 percent of the group's annual profits". And so, as he confesses, "my previous predictions of its imminent demise were wide of the mark".

4 November: Greenslade is furious. How, he demands, can *Express* editor Rosie Boycott justify publishing "disgusting tripe" about Peter Mandelson's friendship with a young Brazilian student? "It was the most prurient of stories, laden with innuendo, which was, I understand, obtained in dubious circumstances involving deception. There was not the least crumb of public interest in it. Not content with giving it a full page inside, this meretricious rubbish was given a huge front page to ensure that it would be read by as many people as possible."

No one is better qualified to deliver such a sermon than Roy Greenslade. He was Kelvin Mackenzie's second-in-command at the *Sun* between 1981 and 1987, the era of such clearly unmeretricious stories as GOTCHA (reporting the deaths of hundreds of Argentine soldiers), ZEE FRENCH ARE FEELTHY — OFFICIAL, LABOUR PICKS RENT BOY AS SCHOOL BOSS, and BENN ON THE COUCH — A TOP PSYCHIATRIST'S VIEW OF BRITAIN'S LEADING LEFTIE. The paper also distinguished itself by running a bogus and hurtful "interview" with Marica McKay, the widow of a Falklands war hero.

Throughout Greenslade's time there, the *Sun* waged ceaseless war against homosexuals. There was the hounding of Peter Tatchell (RED PETE 'WENT TO GAY OLYMPICS'), the "outing" of TV presenter Bill Buckley ('THAT'S LIFE STAR STOLE MY GUY') and a campaign against "pulpit poofs". In 1984 the Press Council ruled that the *Sun* was "improper and extremely offensive to advocate discrimination against homosexual people and encourage employers to discriminate", after an editorial praising Rugby Council for refusing to employ homosexuals, but Greenslade defended the paper's stand against "sick nonsense". Oh, and as editor of the *Mirror* in 1990 he carried a huge splash suggesting that Prince Edward was a "closet queen". "I knew the story fitted the tabloid agenda," he explained at a conference four years later. "It was prurient, puerile and implicitly homophobic. I didn't want to do it but as a tabloid editor fighting a war against a paper I knew would have paid thousands for that story, I knew what I had to do. It was a guaranteed seller."

Quite unlike the Mandelson story, presumably.



WELSH LEAKS

"NEW" Labour's attempt to foist the achingly boring new Welsh secretary Alun Michael on to the mutinous principality is going tragically awry.

Michael, former community activist and one-time hack on the distinctly lefty *Rebecca* magazine — which took its name from the working class riots and agitation during the industrial revolution — stayed pointedly aloof from the devolution campaign and made no secret of his lofty ambitions to play centre stage at Westminster rather than in a hick-town like Cardiff.

An obvious choice, then, to succeed the disgraced Ron "park life" Davies; and a passage no doubt eased by a promise of brighter things if Michael could "sort Wales for Tony". An obvious choice, too, to shoe in as Labour's leader in waiting of the new Welsh assembly for the Blairistas nervous of the "off message" Rhodri Morgan, who had earlier made a stand against Ron Davies.

Morgan has never been forgiven for declaring himself "vintage" Labour while describing his "new" Labour tormentors as "Talibans". Even more worrying are Morgan's tendency to attack unaccountable quangos and his lack of fear of the prime minister's press secretary Alastair Campbell. How selfish then of him to throw his hat in the ring once again and not pull it out when told to.

With 31 percent of the public in an early poll saying Morgan would "be the best leader of the Welsh assembly" compared with an unremittingly feeble 5 percent for Michael, Downing Street went into overdrive. Mindful of the need to select someone who might actually win an election in Wales, Number Ten did the sensible thing: it pressurised the lacklustre Michael into declaring himself the ideal man for the job.

But this was not before some heavy duty arm twisting had been applied to Morgan. A cabal, led by Islwyn MP Don "the selector" Touhig and including old union bruiser George Wright, immediately went into operation. Their generous offer to Morgan that he abandon the race and settle for the deputy leader position was immediately rejected by the wily MP, who denounced it as a "non-starter" and "one of the usual old tricks".

Despairing that their shabby plan was doomed, the plotters dragooned Welsh minister Peter Hain into making a less than convincing call for "unity" and for no troublesome elections at all. With calls going out for the whole party membership to be balloted, the plotters have now dreamed up another "Stop Rhodri" plan whereby the party's rubberstamping executive anoints the irredeemably dull Michael as leader. If and when Morgan rejects this offer, the depths of Tiger Bay may beckon.

MEANWHILE Alun Michael's new found ambition to lead the Land of his Fathers ran deeper into the sand once it was discovered that the nomination process for candidates — reopened especially for Michael — could still not save him from the ignominy of not being selected by his own Cardiff and Penarth constituency.

The nomination process closes on 15 November in his constituency — not even enough time for the fleet of foot new Welsh secretary to get selected. He could find himself a very busy man indeed, what with being a minister, the leader of the assembly and representing two constituencies. And all to please Mr Tony.

CEEFUX

THE typists covering prime minister's question time live from the Commons on BBC2 excelled themselves last week.

The presenter's comments made the Tory leader's attack on the prime minister seem somewhat more personal than political, as the subtitles introduced: "William Hague with a second bite of the Cherie."

RUPERT MURDOCH has found an unlikely ally in his long-running bid to buy Manchester United — Manchester Blackley MP Graham Stringer.

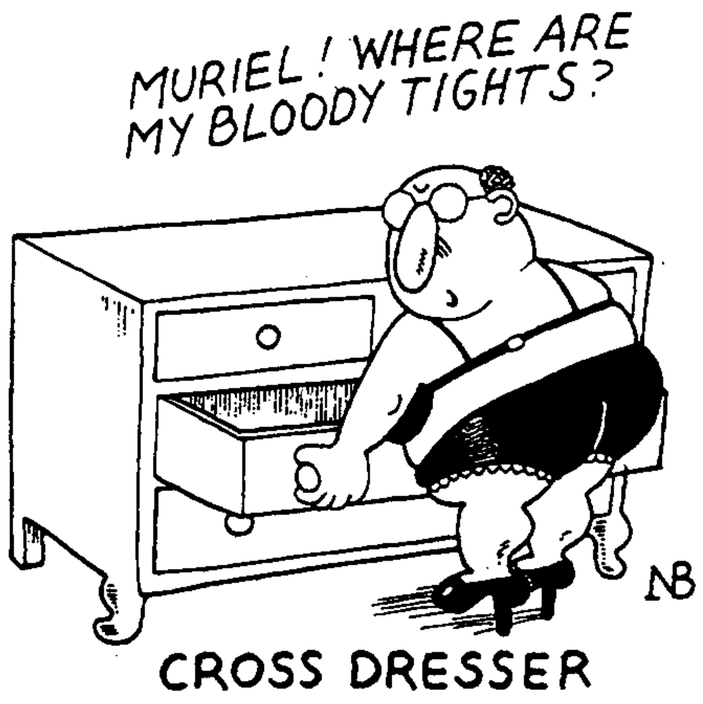
Whereas most Labour politicians (and most United fans) have been hostile to the takeover bid, which has now been referred to the monopolies and mergers commission, Stringer is accusing critics of "longing to go back to a golden age which never existed — the golden glow of youth, maximum wage and going to terraces in flat caps".

In fact there *was* a "golden glow of youth" (it was killed in the Munich air disaster); there *was* a maximum wage (it was lifted in the early 60s); and there *were* plenty of fans on the terraces in flat caps. So why is he now being so friendly to an organisation whose papers he wanted banned from Manchester town hall when he was city council leader?

Surely it couldn't have anything to do with Manchester's desperation to attract Sky TV coverage for the 2002 Commonwealth Games which is set to lose the city a fortune?

ANGRY mining unions in Wales have accused the government of a "politically motivated delay" in paying compensation to 6,000 former miners suffering from the debilitating vibration white finger syndrome.

Since British Coal was wound up the trade department has been responsible for the multi-million settlement of a case brought and won by the NUM and pit deputies union, NACODS. Merthyr Tydfil solicitors, Hugh James, Jones and Jenkins have now gone back to court to force the DTI to release the compensation. They claim the government is deliberately sitting it out "to save money through allowing older and frailer claimants to die before they can be compensated".



AFTER returning from a protest at the Skye bridge to mark the third anniversary of the introduction of the highest tolls in Europe, anti-toll activists were horrified to see Ceefax and Teletext reports claiming that they had "jostled" actress Virginia McKenna, who was visiting the area.

The next day they were even more astonished to read reports in Sunday papers that a "crowd" had surged forward and scuffles had broken out when activists tried to lobby Scottish office minister Calum MacDonald.

However, whoever had spread these false stories had not reckoned on McKenna. She issued an angry press release denying that she had been "jostled" by protesters.

As for the scuffles with Calum MacDonald, he was actually approached by some protesters in a hotel, long after the protest. There he was politely asked why Labour had reneged on its promise to abolish the tolls. When he denied that such a commitment had been made, the delegation produced election literature issued by the Labour candidate Donnie Munro, containing the pledges. Calum blurted out that what Donnie said was nothing to do with him.

Perhaps he should have called on his fellow Scottish MP and transport minister Brian Wilson for advice. Then again Wilson might not want to be reminded that in the days before "new" Labour he was spotted carrying "No Tolls" placards at demonstrations.

ORDER OF THE BACKBENCH BROWN NOSE

THE last prime minister's questions was not one of Tony Blair's easiest half hours.

Usually he can rely on being eased in with a suitably oily compliment or two, but the opposition knives were out almost before he had entered the chamber, with inquiries into such touchy subjects as growth league forecasts, monetary union, cabinet politics, the working families tax credit and the International Monetary Fund.

Thank heavens then for Ivan Henderson (Harwich), who slipped in the magnificently meaningless: "Will my Right Honourable Friend assure me that no Labour government would wait 18 years before listening to the people?" — a question obviously held on file since before the summer recess when it might have seemed topical.

Ignoring the fact that no Labour government has ever had the chance to wait 18 years for anything, Tony smugly announced: "We listened to the people very successfully before the election... and we must carry on doing so."

ASTONISHED Labour party members are trying to digest an alarming questionnaire from party HQ.

Members are asked a lot of meaningless questions such as: "Do you agree that by initiating a complete range of economic and social measures such as New Deal and ensuring sound finances, we can move towards economic stability and away from the cycle of boom and bust. a) Agree b) Disagree (and if it is the latter, expect a visit from nice Mr Whelan).

Or they are asked: "Do you agree that our investment of £19bn to cut class sizes over the next three years will help deliver a world class education service offering opportunity for all to reach their potential. a) Agree b) Disagree (and should it be the latter expect a week's vacation at a reeducation camp of your choice).

Not surprisingly most questionnaires have made the short journey from letter box to waste paper bin.

ONE of the more ludicrous proposals of the millennium commission is to build a tower at Portsmouth.

The idea is that people would be so excited by the prospect of going up the tower to gaze at the city they will flood into Portsmouth in huge numbers and make the tower profitable. So a new and fashionable partnership was struck between public and private enterprise.

The commission put up £20m of lottery money and persuaded a booming local construction company, Berkeley Homes, to build the tower and run it. Whoops! Berkeley's accountants took a closer look at the figures, reckoned the projections for visitors were ludicrously optimistic and pulled out.

The millennium commission called a panic meeting with Portsmouth city council, which agreed to try to find a new operator. In any event, the council agreed to underwrite the tower. So the wretched ratepayers of Portsmouth will pay for their tower forever even if (when?) it turns out to be a financial disaster.

On 2 November Mike Hancock, Lib Dem MP for Portsmouth South, protested in the Commons about this heavy new burden for ratepayers. He was stridently opposed by the two other MPs for the area representing "new" Labour (Sydney Rapson, Portsmouth North) and the Tory party (Peter Viggers, Gosport), who joined across the floor to voice the strongest possible support for the tower.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"The chancellor himself has worked energetically to shift the G7 into a more activist mood, and he deserves much credit for this," wrote economist Gavyn Davies, of Goldman Sachs, in the *Independent* on 9 November.

FACT: Sue Nye, wife of Gavyn Davies, is economic adviser to the chancellor.

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSORS...

ONE donation to "new" Labour that has attracted no press attention whatsoever — despite Robin Cook's blather about his "ethical" foreign policy — is that of Raytheon, one of the world's largest arms manufacturers.

Raytheon churns out Patriot missiles, along with Hawk, Sidewinder and Stinger surface-to-air missiles. In the UK it sells or has sold the RAPTOR (Reconnaissance Airborne Pod for Tornado), ASTOR (Airborne Stand-off radar) and BVRAAM (Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missiles). But this People's Party supporter doesn't just make lethal toys for boys: it can boast of involvement in a range of financial scandals and labour abuses.

In April this year Raytheon paid $2.7m to settle a cost accounting dispute with the US government. In November 1997 Raytheon agreed to pay the US government over $2m to settle defective pricing claims over the award of US navy contracts to the company.

This year the Labour party sponsor signed a $484m contract to provide support for Saudi Arabia's Patriot and Hawk missiles. It is currently touting its Argus Falcon remote infrared monitoring system to Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia and Thailand.

To make Raytheon even more suitable as a Labour sponsor, it also has an appalling record on labour relations. It's been found to be in absolute breach of American labour law on a number of occasions (which, given the relatively weak protection of American workers, is an achievement). In 1988 it refused to recognise guards' unions at its plants in New Hampshire, despite certification by the National Labour Relations Board. It simply said the government certification was "improper" until in 1990 the court of appeal forced the firm to negotiate.

In 1995 the US general accounting office investigated which government contractors were violating labour law. Raytheon was singled out (through subsidiary Beech Aerospace Services) for refusing to bargain with union reps in Florida. Again the company ignored official certification of the union. All very new Labour, really.

'Backbiter'

CHURCH NEWS

GEORGE Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, surprised many with his call for "compassion" for General Pinochet and his emphasis on Lady Thatcher's call for the torturer to be released. But at least his stance is exactly in keeping with the Church of England's investment policy.

The church commissioners keep their organisation afloat thanks partly to substantial investment in arms companies with Chilean interests. Although the commissioners mutter about ethical investment, they hold a £15.8m investment in GEC, which will be displaying its "Blindfire 2000 battlefield tracking Radar" at ExpoNaval in Chile this December.

LEGAL EAGLE

CHERIE BLAIR presided over a dinner last month to celebrate 100 years of the Poor Man's Lawyer, the aid society that gives free legal services.

The evening's festivities took place in Toynbee Hall at the Inner Temple. But many diners, as they sat to listen to the prime minister's wife deliver her address, were hugely amused to read the mis-spelling of the venue on the evening's programme: "The rise and role of the Poor Man's Lawyer, free legal services at *Tonybee* Hall".

NOOKS and CORNERS

SOMETIMES sanity wins through. Recently, the lord mayor of Oxford "reopened" the portico of the Ashmolean Museum. This bold decision was the first made by the new director of the institution, Christopher Brown. Well, good. But why on earth did the main entrance *need* reopening?

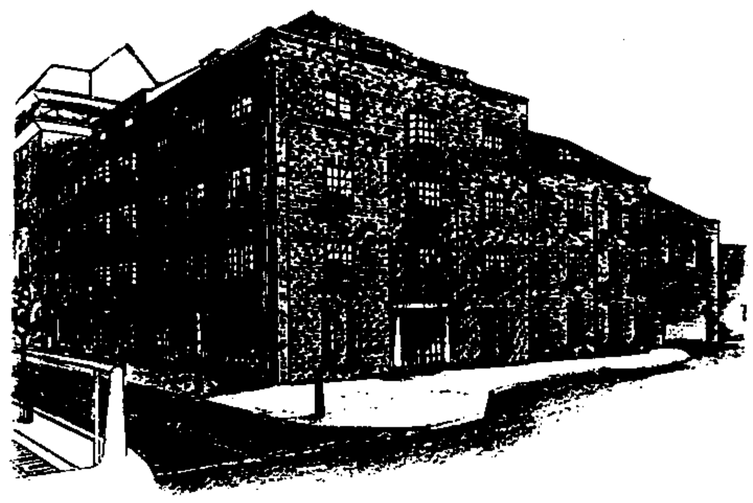
Directly inside the central Ionic portico on C.R. Cockerell's magnificent Classical building, it was obviously the way to go in: architecture, geometry, logic all said, er, "entrance". But, as readers may recall (870, 871), the front door had been closed by Brown's predecessor who kow-towed to an "anonymous benefactor", aka Sir Tim Sainsbury, and allowed the modish and overrated architects Stanton Williams to spoil one of the finest buildings in Oxford, and Britain.

The forecourt was paved and altered for no good reason; the main entrance was closed and visitors were directed — by a notice — to a door in the lefthand wing which leads straight into the shop — what the modern museum is all about. Did these dim, posturing designers not understand that decent architecture has its own logic; that a portico is more powerful than a notice with an arrow? Evidently not. But you cannot expect creatures of fashion to comprehend simple logic.

Nor can you expect academics to resist the financial blandishments of benefactors, however misguided or mischievous. For I am sorry to have to report that the university of Oxford now has new plans to change things at the Ashmolean and thus compromise seriously distinguished architecture.

Another "anonymous benefactor" has offered the museum a collection of Islamic art and, to house it, an existing gallery is to be extended over the site of the main lecture hall of the adjacent Taylorian Institution. Now, it may have been a mistake for the university to decide to house both a museum and a faculty of modern languages in one building in the 1830s, but that is past history. The Taylorian is still in the east wing of Cockerell's masterpiece, as intended, and in the subtle extension along St Giles' designed by T. Harold Hughes and opened in 1932. And it is Hughes' vaguely Art Deco lecture hall that is now threatened with destruction. In compensation, the Anonymous Benefactor has offered the modern languages faculty a whizzy new "state-of-the-art" lecture theatre buried in the ground. But that is not really the point.

The point is that money is all very well and necessary, but if benefactors are not sometimes constrained in their generosity by wider considerations, damage as well as good can ensue. After all, there is the Wafic Said Business School (see *Eyes passim*), which the university is drooling to have but which requires the removal of the very remarkable old Midland railway station — and there was the cretinous closing of the main entrance of the Ashmolean which now, happily, has been undone.



BUT what hope is there for good architecture when local authorities also say yes, please, to any old rubbish that is proposed if there is money behind it?

My illustration shows the ostensibly "revised" design for a new 55-bedroom hotel to be built behind and attached to the old Anchor pub on Bankside in London. Now the Anchor, listed grade II, was for decades the one historic building with life in it when the South Bank of the Thames consisted of grand, decaying warehouses. All that has changed: most of the warehouses have given way to new offices and blocks of flats of almost unremitting vulgarity and mediocrity to complement the Globe Theatre and the Tate's Gallery of Modern Art in Bankside Power Station — and the Anchor.

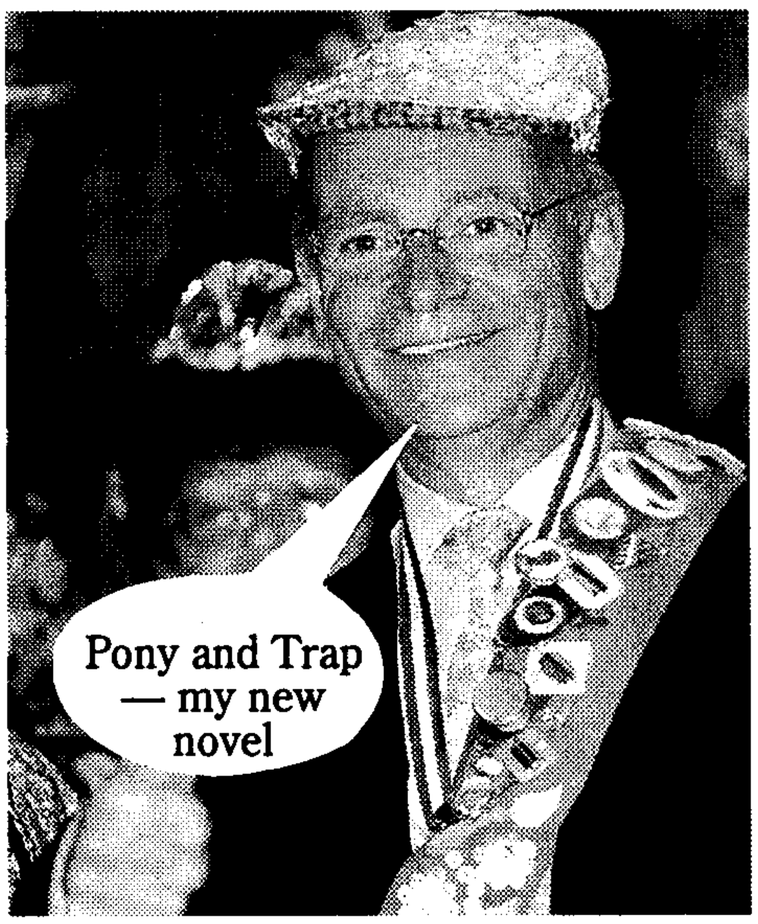
The new hotel which will completely overwhelm the pub has been "designed" for Greenall Inns by something called Tibbatts Associates, "Design Consultants and Architects". The sensitivity is such that the four-storey block steps down in a series of lurches to fit in with the poor old two-storey riverside pub, and the designers reject the tired pedantry of correct, elegant Neo-Georgian while avoiding any hint of the unacceptable rebarbativeness of modernity. Bland, illiterate compromise is what such commercial clients want, after all.

So will the good Labour councillors of Southwark grant this feeble rubbish planning permission and listed building consent, rather than insist that Greenall Inns employ decent, proper architects for a development on this historic site by the Thames? Of course they will.

'Piloti'

'I am going to have to watch my backside.' Lord Rogers of Riverside on having won the Welsh Assembly competition. *Sunday Times*, 25.10.98

LORD ARCHER RHYMING SLANG (cont)



LORDS FOR HIRE

THE following peers are paid advisers to the public relations and lobbying industry.

Life Peers

Lord Bell: Chairman of Chime Communications plc.

Lord Chadlington (Peter Gummer): Chairman of Shandwick International plc.

Baroness Denton of Wakefield: Managing director of Burson-Marsteller Europe.

Lord Hogg of Cumbernauld: Consultant to LSA.

Lord Lovell-Davis: Chairman of Pettifor Morrow and Associates.

Lord McNally: Vice-Chairman of Shandwick Consultants Ltd.

Lord Newby: Director and employee of Matrix Communications Consultancy Ltd.

Lord Renton of Mount Harry: International Consultant to ESL and Network UK Ltd.

Lord Wade of Chorlton: Chairman of Marlow Wade and Partners Ltd.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie: Director and employee of P.S. Public Affairs Consultants Ltd.

Hereditary Peers

Lord Addington: Consultant to Milton Broadway Corporate Relations.

Lord Carrington: Director of Chime Communications plc.

FIVE TV

Clarkson (BBC2)

EARLIER this year Square Eyes reported on the launch of Sky One's anti-PC talk show *Littlejohn*, in which the journalist said the unsayable about events and nations. He was joined on screen by Jeremy Clarkson, host of BBC2's *Top Gear*, who daringly smoked on screen and said anti-politically correct things.

The show was generally regarded as a disaster — Sky One soon took the series off air because of poor ratings — but, astonishingly, it seems to have impressed BBC2, which has now given the chief guest on that melancholy night a talk-show series of his own, in which he — yes — lights up on screen and courageously resists that secret conspiracy which means that only liberal views are ever heard on television.

If Clarkson were a car, then *Top Gear* would be extremely rude about its marketing and design process. Strangely, the series came about because of Clive James's age and shape. James co-owns and runs Watchmaker Productions, a production company so far exclusively dedicated to the making of series featuring the burly Antipodean.

Accountants and bank managers dislike companies depending entirely on the energy and survival of one man (hence, for example, the City's traditional nervousness abut the Virgin empire) and so Watchmaker was encouraged to get some new parts. Sticking to the outlines of its work with Clive — making talk shows and series which mock the behaviour of foreigners — they set out to sign up another mouthy xenophobe.

After the first pilot for *Clarkson*, the host commendably told the BBC that it had been a disaster and he was a hopeless talk-show host. But, in an industry built on optimism and bullshit, this flash of 20:20 self-knowledge was terrifying and the obvious plan A — get a new presenter — was dropped in favour of the all too common Plan B: another lunch, another pilot, love-bombing memos and, phew, Jezza's onside again.

Clarkson, it turned out on Sunday night, is not the kind of series (cf *Parkinson*, *Clive Anderson*... etc) in which a fairly famous host talks to really famous guests. No, this is a concept talk show in which a famous host explores a theme with little-known pundits served up as straight-men for his scripted gags.

In *Clarkson*, the concept is a geography lesson taught by Alf Garnett. The presenter first summoned an American journalist — Laurie Pike — to harangue her about her compatriots' tendency towards therapy and obesity. Then an Italian academic was pushed into the chair to defend his nation against charges of — wait for it — bad driving and unstable government.

The next guest was Muriel Grey but — just when you were wondering what her answers might be to accusations of meanness and men wearing skirts — it became clear that the concept had changed to a more general rightwing cussedness. Muriel, a keen fell-walker, was there to defend the use of feet to get from A to B. Jezza, you see, simply can't be arsed with walking. What's the bloody point when you can use a car? They liked this concept so much that a woman from the Health Education Council was dragged on to explain what cigarettes did to the body. The presenter dismissed her and then lit up.

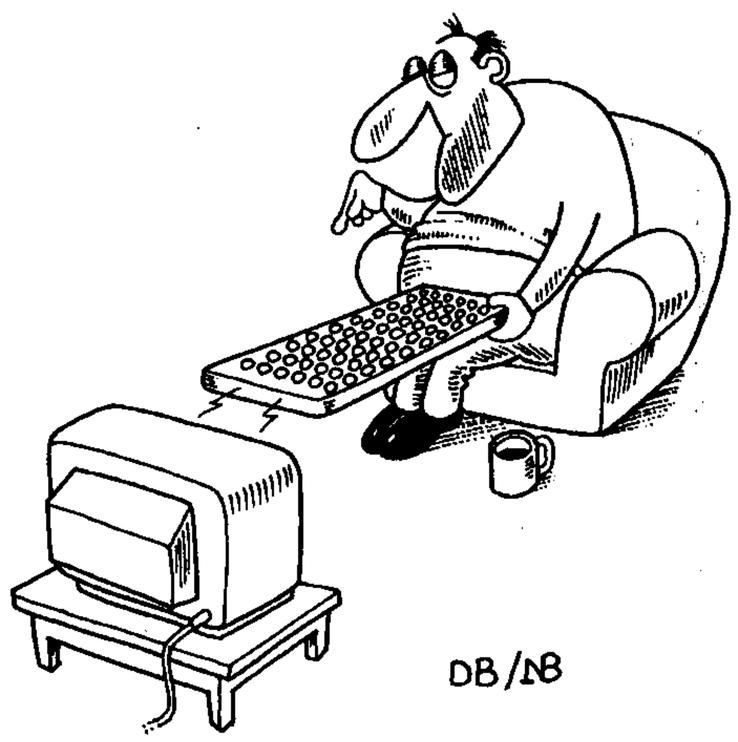
If you were writing a satirical send-up of *Clarkson*, the host would at this point have turned to the camera and defended Hitler. Well, bugger me, he actually did. Adolf was casually dropped in to a link for Clarkson's Dictator Of The Week award, in which — because, see, the world needs more dictators — he will move the world's tyrants up and down a league table depending on their activities in any given week.

Well, very daring. But, as this column has pointed out before, the anti-PC talk show is finally impossible in British television because of the strict regulation of taste. Just as the first edition of *Littlejohn* in the summer avoided any mention of Linda McCartney — who had died just before transmission — so Clarkson stuck rigorously to the BBC's guidelines with regard to not mentioning Peter Mandelson's homosexuality. And, if China or Iraq carries out a massacre during the run of the series, you can bet that the dictator of the week slot will be quietly dropped. Similarly Jezza's smoking gag will have been worked out to comply with BBC fire regulations.

Twenty years ago, Clive James, as television critic of the *Observer*, would have chased *Clarkson* off the screen. Now he's the creator of it. As Clarkson might have said in another context, the wheels are coming off.

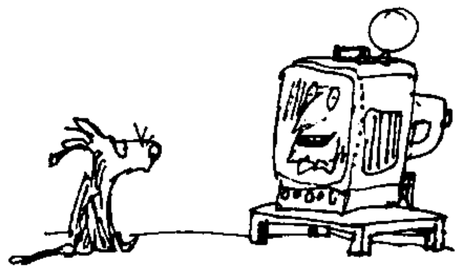
'Square Eyes'

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Digital makes work for idle hands

MEDIA NEWS



THE transformation of Broadcasting House from a centrally located production facility for the whole of the BBC into a suite of plush corporate offices is entering its final stages.

Rows of offices that once held more than a dozen journalists each have become elegant spaces for strategy review teams "working" in relaxed groups of, er, four.

The news information library, first shunted into the basement and finally thrown into a skip, was sacrificed to "liberate" yet more space for corporate suites like these — this time with splendid views across Portland Place for senior staff. Now the staff canteen looks set to follow News Inf below stairs. It too has superb views across London and the BBC's "Corporate Centre" covets the image-boosting potential for its own "business leaders".

Resistance is being organised by BBC Drama, which has already had to relinquish its 6th floor offices to "Corporate Centre", which was able to pay far more rent. Drama was moved and its old space upgraded with a smart new air-conditioning system for the fussy suits. But where do they keep the new aircon machinery? In the space drama has been shunted into of course.

THE benefits of a "more efficient use of staff" — ie sackings coupled with an increased workload for those left behind — are finally being felt by customers of "Bonking" Rod Lynch's BBC Resources Ltd.

A recent "Customer Services Summit" revealed that only half the calls to BBC Resources were answered by real people (the rest go to voicemail), and that only half the callers got to speak to the person they actually wanted. A series of customer surveys produced a number of glittering endorsements: "You're not as good as you think you are," wrote one customer. "Please, please, please sort out the invoicing," suggested another, "your competitors value their customers. A change of attitude at BBC Resources — management and staff — would work wonders."

None of this is the result of the belt-tightening endured by Resources prior to being hived off by the BBC as a limited company, so staff will have to brace themselves for another round of customer service seminars until they get it right.

PASS THE SICK BAG...

I AM writing to complain about the BBC Choice advert. They do not mention my mother's name. They make people think that Pauline Quirke is the Head of BBC Choice when it is, in fact, my mother. Please do an advert that includes my mother.

— Complaint in *Ariel* from Alicia Queiro, eight-year-old daughter of Katherine Everett, head of programming, BBC Choice.

CHANNEL Four's *Hard News* programme about the *Guardian*'s exposé of Carlton TV's fake programme on drugs, *The Connection*, may be upstaged by a three-part BBC series entitled *Truth and Television*.

The first programme to be analysed in the series will be *The Connection*, which was commissioned by Roger James, then head of documentaries at Carlton. Another programme likely to be dissected is a Central TV 1988 extravaganza entitled *The Men Who Killed Kennedy*.

This programme ran into difficulties when the three men named as the assassins protested. It emerged that at the time of Kennedy's assassination, one of the men had been on a US navy ship; another had been blind; and the third had been in prison. The programme was commissioned by Central's then deputy head of documentaries, Roger James, who also commissioned *The Connection*.

ONE connection between BBC *Newsnight*'s Jeremy Paxman and trade and industry secretary Peter Mandelson which has *not* been mentioned in the welter of publicity about them is the fact that both are "fellows" of the British American Project.

This grandly named talking shop was founded in 1984 in general Reagan-Thatcher dismay at the rising movement for British nuclear disarmament. The BAP singles out likely members of the "successor generation" and packs them off every year for an expenses-paid freebie, alternatively in the US and Britain.

The "successors" talk to each other on important topics, eat, drink and come back again. Then they become BAP fellows with an absolute right to turn up at the freebie any year they like. Pater Mandelson first went in 1987 (to Airlie, Virginia) and Paxman (to Turnberry, Scotland) in 1990.

This year's successors are about to take off for a free week in a top hotel in New Orleans. They include Douglas Alexander, a former speech writer to Gordon Brown who was "elected" (appointed from on high) as Labour candidate for the safe seat of Paisley South after the untimely death of Gordon McMaster.

IT IS not quite true that the Birt-approved censorship of Peter Mandelson's love-life was "unprecedented" in BBC history, as several papers claimed.

In February 1994 a similar edict forbade any reporting of the details of Stephen Milligan's death — the stockings, the plastic bag, the satsuma in the mouth. BBC hacks were allowed to say only that the Tory MP had expired "in unusual sexual circumstances". A couple of days later, after saturation coverage elsewhere, the ban was partially lifted. "We can now say that he was wearing women's clothing," a memo advised. "But on no account mention fruit."

By an amazing coincidence Stephen Milligan was, like Peter Mandelson, a close friend of John Birt.

LUVVIES

"I've always tried to vary my work, and now I'd like to return to the theatre. It's back to basics, sackcloth and ashes, not a lot of pay but always a lot of pain."

TONY DOYLE

Radio Times

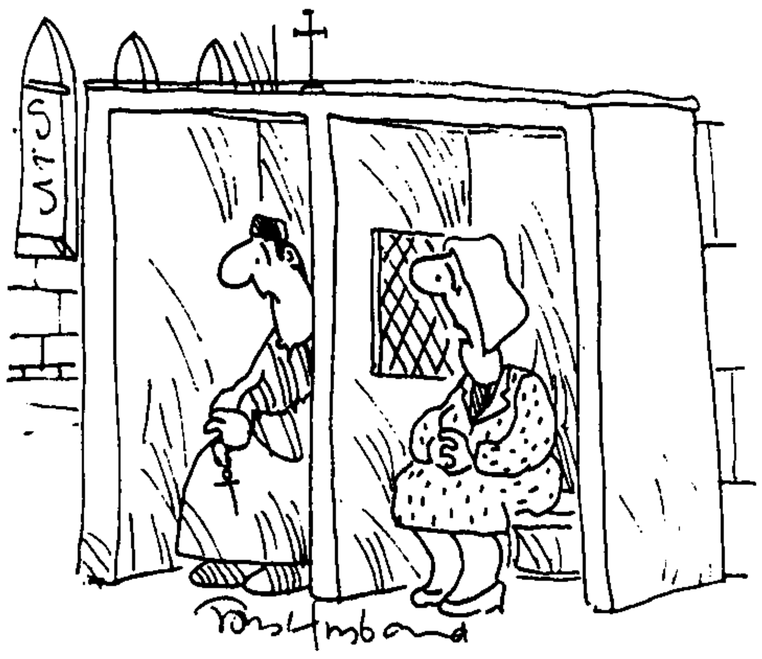
AS THE ratings slide continues at Rupert Murdoch's Fox tv network, panic seems to be setting in — not least in the world of "reality specials", many of which cross the Atlantic to dominate Sky One and prop up ITV's prime time viewing figures.

Many people marvel at just how much close circuit or camcorder material is available and simply waiting to be packaged into winners like *World's Deadliest Police Chases*, *Stalking The Stalkers* and *When Animals Attack!* But a possible explanation for Fox's prolific output of reality shows is to be found in an obscure Associated Press report filed from the not very well known city of Boise, Indiana.

There, police have arrested three actors and four producers operating out of a rented suburban house. They were allegedly manufacturing scenes for *The World's Nastiest Neighbours*, which is due on screen on both sides of the Atlantic early next year.

Police claim the actors were hired to deliberately provoke those living in adjoining houses by, among others japes, sounding a bullhorn at odd hours, performing mud wrestling in the front garden and releasing into the street a flock of pink flamingoes. Disturbing the peace charges have followed and a trial has been set for February.

So far Fox's normally fluid PR machine has not offered an alternative version of events to that put forward by the police. No doubt on this side of the Atlantic the Independent Television Commission will be taking a close look at Fox's US reality shows and Sky's local clones.



"Father, I've got an Asda loyalty card and I shopped at Tesco"

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Brian De Palma's *Snake Eyes* manages to give itself the semblance of a portentous yet popular drama. Don't be fooled, though. It's crap through and through."

Alexander Walker, page 26, London *Evening Standard*, 5 November 98.

"Snake Eyes: A hugely gripping drama about a cop's on-the-spot investigation of a political assassination."

— Alexander Walker, *Hot Tickets* supplement, London *Evening Standard*, 5 November 1998.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE ever rising total of pay-offs to departed and soon-to-be-departed executives at the Royal Opera House is fast approaching the figure that would have sustained the opera performances next year that chairman Sir Colin Southgate has so cleverly cancelled.

Although director of mis-communications Judy "I do so love a massage" Grahame was reported to have resigned, informed sources reveal that she was pushed out with a pay-off in excess of £60,000. Not bad for 10 months' "work". Former chief executive Mary "Just Writing My Diary" Allen is believed to have received substantially in excess of that amount, with the bank transfer actually queried by the ROH's bank, Coutts.

Sir Jeremy "Is It Lunchtime Yet?" Isaacs netted £240,000 during the last two years of his ROH tenure — during which time he managed to squeeze in production of the BBC2 series *Cold War*, sadly oblivious to the all nuclear fallout around him at Covent Garden.

Meanwhile long-suffering ROH staff now have to endure bitchy articles about their new contracts from the likes of *Times* journalist Richard Morrison — whose efforts as a trombonist are still recalled with horror by some members of the ROH orchestra.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

WORLD OF HYPE

WHEN General Pinochet found himself under arrest in London, he decided to recruit the best PR adviser that money could buy.

Alas, he got prize chump Patrick Robertson instead.

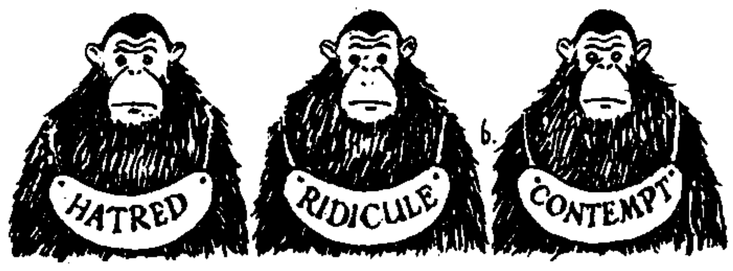
As Robertson explains to *PR Week*, his task is to expose the dishonesty of the British government which "pretends to the world that Pinochet is a brutal dictator". He certainly has plenty of experience in working with rightwing ogres: nine years ago, while still an Oxford undergraduate, he ingratiated himself with Margaret Thatcher by founding the Bruges Group.

Since moving into the spin-doctoring business, Robertson has proved his genius at salvaging reputations. In 1995, for instance, he sent a top-secret memo to the treasury minister Jonathan Aitken, advising him on how to fend off unwelcome press inquiries. Unfortunately it was faxed to the wrong number and promptly splashed all over the *Independent on Sunday*. Aitken resigned shortly afterwards.

Undaunted by this cock-up, Robertson became chief spokesman for Sir Jams Goldsmith and the Referendum Party — again with spectacular results. When disgruntled Referendum supporters asked why he wasn't getting their message across, Robertson explained that it was all part of his ingenious strategy: the party would operate like a submarine, moving stealthily underwater for many months before surfacing suddenly "with a splash". In the event, the only splash was that of candidates drowning their sorrows.

For the past year Robertson has been employed by the government of Chechnya to improve its image — with such success that few foreigners will now go near the country for fear of being kidnapped. Andrew Dodge, a former colleague at the Bruges Group, has summarised Robertson's talents thus: "He treats people like shit." A man after Pinochet's heart, clearly.

LIBEL NEWS



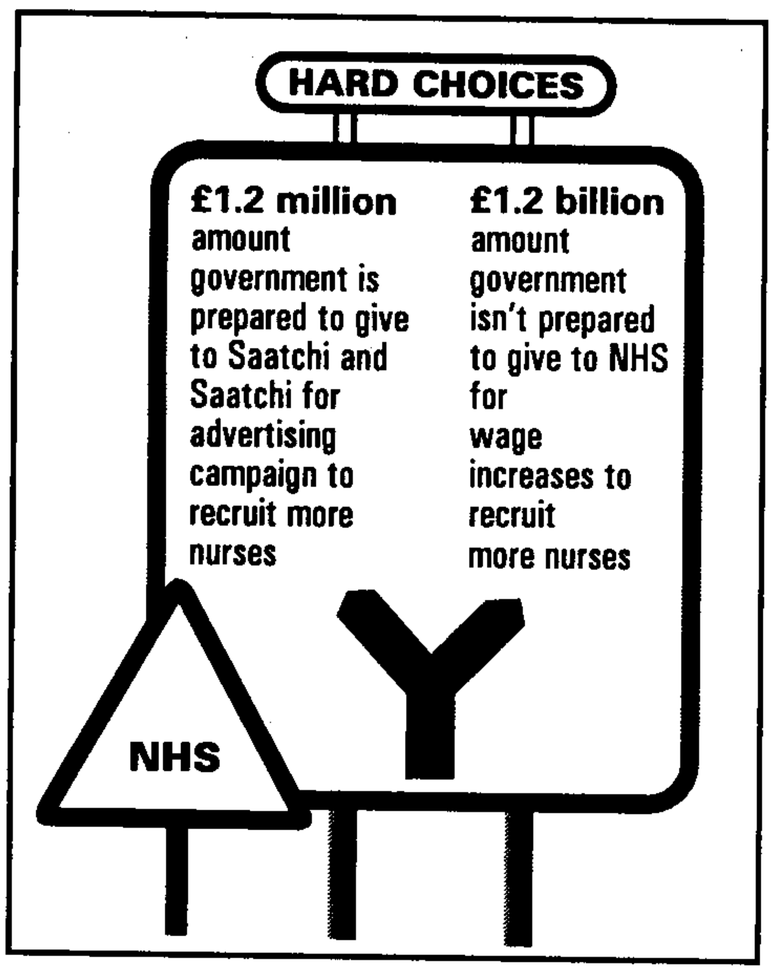
THE mystery of how Neil Hamilton is financing his libel action against Mohamed Fayed has been solved by the *Eye*.

The secret fund is controlled by Lord Harris of High Cross, the extreme right-wing former head of the Institute of Economic Affairs, and Norris "Notorious" McWhirter, former chairman of the Freedom Association.

In a confidential letter seen by the *Eye*, Harris discloses that "we are within striking distance of reaching our initial target of £150,000". He added: "If Fayed faces up to defending the action, it could run for three weeks or more in court. Neil Hamilton's lawyers anticipate his total costs could then exceed £300,000. In order to be absolutely certain of counter-acting when necessary anything Fayed may throw at him, Neil needs to amass a war chest of that order to be called on as the need arises."

Attached to this begging letter is an article by Paul Johnson from the *Spectator* which Harris claims, dubiously, "is the latest evidence of influential opinion shifting in Neil's favour".

Hamilton's rightwing "friends" are now soliciting extra cash and promising contributors "complete confidentiality for all who desire it". So who are the disgraced former minister's benefactors? Well, certainly not Lord "Flasher" Bell. Though he did indeed send Lord Harris a cheque two months ago, it could not possibly have been to help Hamilton's fight against Fayed. Why not? Because until recently Bell-Pottinger Communications was receiving a fat monthly retainer for "PR services" from, er, Mohamed Fayed.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on fares

A RARE consolation for passengers when British Rail was being privatised was the guarantee that the cost of certain tickets would not increase faster than the rate of inflation. So much for guarantees.

Passengers in the south east were shocked last autumn when Opraf, the office of passenger rail franchising, announced that it was allowing most London commuter franchises to raise price-capped season tickets by more than inflation — 2 percent more in several cases.

Now another "protected" fare, the long-distance saver ticket, is also mutating.

Opraf ostensibly protects the saver from abuse by the likes of Virgin Trains, whose intention is to force passengers to buy tickets valid on Virgin services only. Yet Virgin has banned savers on early-evening departures from Euston. For passengers who have to travel at this time it means a huge price rise: they have to buy standard return tickets instead of savers (even if travelling to London at off-peak times). A saver from Manchester to London, for example, costs £46.50; but a standard return costs £108 — a rise of 132 percent. Not bad for a fare the Tories promised would not rise by more than inflation.

In the small print on the savers' regulations is a loophole allowing their prohibition in evening peaks, practically inviting companies to rip off passengers who thought their ticket was safe. Great Western Trains has now banned savers on peak trains out of Paddington. It reduced the saver fare by 5 percent as compensation, but this is no consolation to people now forced to buy standard returns instead of savers. Residents of western Cornwall, for example, may have to buy £111 standard returns as the last train of the day to Penzance on which the £55 saver is valid leaves London at 3.35pm.

Virgin meanwhile is creating more complications with new local tickets valid on Virgin services only. These undercut established fares only by a quid or two, but Virgin keeps all the income instead of sharing it with other operators. For journeys from Stoke-on-Trent to Stockport, for instance, Virgin has introduced *six* new tickets. Staff must explain them to passengers while queues grow at the ticket window.

If other operators follow suit, even simple local journeys could become impossibly confusing. This would then increase the incidence (already widespread) of clerks and the rail inquiries phoneline failing to advise customers of cheapest fares. The regulating authorities are doing nothing to stop this, preferring to criticise staff and fine the inquiries service for poor performance.

Curiously, Virgin Trains displays posters boasting "Booking a train ticket should be simple. So we've started reducing the confusing number of ticket options. We've also started removing the baffling terms and conditions you've encountered before." Is this the same Virgin Trains that has introduced heaps of confusing new tickets? Er, yes.

'Dr B. Ching'

DOING THE ROUNDS

HEALTH secretary Frank Dobson takes cancer seriously. Alas, a survey of chemotherapy for ovarian cancer in 60 health authorities has found that 48 of them are not committed to providing (i.e. committed to rationing) the most effective treatment as outlined by the Joint Council of Clinical Oncology and endorsed by the department of health's own standing medical advisory committee.

Both Dobson and health minister Alan Milburn prefer to live in a fantasy world where the mention of rationing is forbidden — and yet here is one of many examples.

The previous administration let dental care and long term provision for the elderly fall off the NHS without any public debate at all, but Labour has nailed its health commitment firmly to the mast by promising effective care to those in need, and especially those with cancer. Expect a shift of resour ces away from a less vote-worthy specialty soon.

● ORKNEY health board (OHB) might be the smallest in the country, but it is still the proud holder of three records.

When the Royal College of Nurses (RCN) got into dispute with OHB after the board had dismissed two nurses with 50 years' service between them, the RCN representative said that in 17 years of experience this was "the most disgraceful case I have ever seen".

Record number two was established when it was discovered that seven months after a nationally agreed pay award, the OHB had failed to give the cash to its staff, making the Orkneys the last place in Britain to receive the extra money.

Record three might be fiercely contested by other health boards, but locals firmly believe OHB also has the country's lowest level of morale. This wasn't helped when chairman Alan Jackson (salary: £56,000-a-year) announced that Kirkwall's Eastbank Hospital for the elderly was to close, and two thirds of the local adult population signed a petition against closure.

Jackson showed his remarkable knowledge of local healthcare by slating Eastbank and saying if he was elderly or infirm he wouldn't want to be cared for there. In fact in the past three years Eastbank has twice been named the best in Scotland for its levels of care. After repeated protests OHB contacted the Scottish office and was given, with little fuss, £5m to keep Eastbank open. A few days later OHB ran a press release congratulating itself on this magnificent achievement.

● THE British Medical Association (BMA) occupies a grand position in London's Tavistock Square — but not for much longer perhaps if BMA Professional Services Limited, which offers all sorts of financial and insurance packages to members, continues its current trend.

In the period to December 1996 on a turnover of £6,740 it lost £248,551. In the second year of trading, to December 1997, it lost £1,015,949 on a turnover of £186,568. The irony is that such companies were set up in acknowledgement of the fact that doctors are useless with money. Still, at least now I know where my sub is going.

M.D.

IN MEMORIAM

DR Chris Chapman — the NHS whistleblower who was sacked after exposing scientific fraud at Leeds General Infirmary (*Eyes passim*) — has died of cancer.

Sadly, Labour's promises in opposition — that Dr Chapman would get his old job back when Labour took office — proved to be worthless. So too did a lengthy inquiry into the case by former Labour home secretary Lord Merlyn Rees, whose report rubbished Dr Chapman and let the authorities off the hook — despite acknowledging that the doctor saved taxpayers' money by exposing the fraud.

At the time of his death, on 4 November, Dr Chapman was still fighting to reopen the inquiry.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THERE were loud cheers at English Nature and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) when environment minister Michael Meacher unveiled a recent consultation paper on the future of SSSIs — sites of special scientific interest such as ancient woods, marshes and hay meadows.

It proposes to do away with the much-hated principle of "profit-foregone", under which owners were paid for the cash which they suddenly decided they could have made if their sites had not been listed. This dates from the 1981 countryside and wildlife act, of which countryside historian Oliver Rackham noted acidly: "Its provisions for compensation are scandalously open to abuse."

The Nature Conservancy Council, as it then was, was hamstrung by lack of funds to operate this official rent-a-site conservation, and so found it difficult to enter into expensive management agreements with owners. However, the limitations of nature conservation on special sites lie deeper than shortage of cash.

SSSIs evolved as a response to the wholesale destruction of wildlife habitat from the 1960s onwards. They represent the acquiescence of both conservationists and governments of the day to the sacred cows of agriculture and forestry. The resulting special site mentality was the equivalent of handing out a few lifebelts as the ship went down.

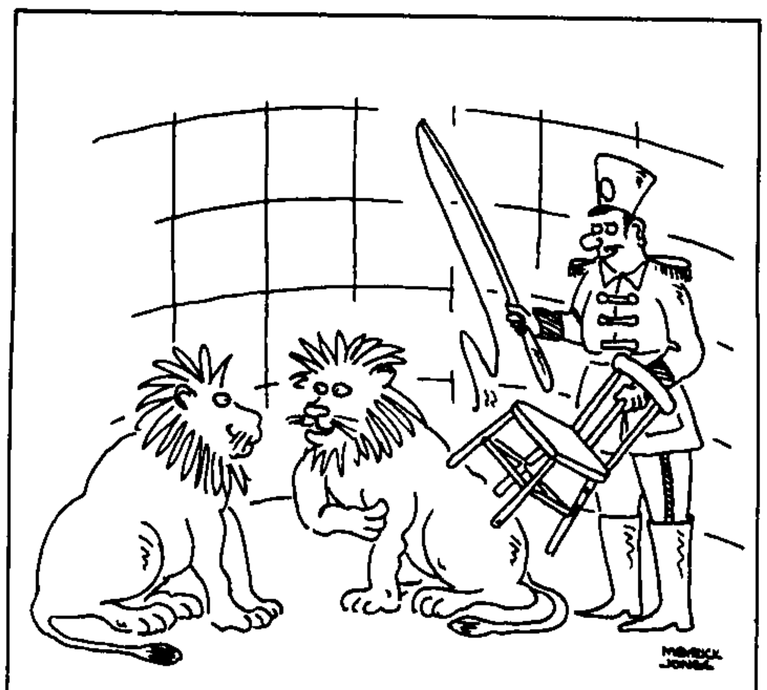
Since the SSSI's introduction, the idea that conservation means small areas rescued from economic use has been hard to kill. As late as the mid-80s respectable agriculturalists were still discussing what percentage of Britain we should set aside "for conservation" and some of the farming industry still thinks that way today.

Not that the rescue was very effective. The selection of sites, although detailed and rigorous, was never meant to be more than a sample of special types within each region. So for every listed wood there may be dozens of equally good ones out in the cold. Even the actual protection didn't work. SSSIs have been neglected, damaged or lost at rates close to those of unlisted sites. Moreover, the designation process itself carried risks: a well-known arable farmer at Stockbridge in Hampshire still boasts of ploughing out a chunk of water-meadow which was being considered for listing just to spite the nasty greens.

The decline of traditional land-use means the conservation of some types of site, such as lowland heaths, will always face practical difficulties. But Meacher's wide-ranging and sensible proposals would give English Nature and CCW both the power and resource to protect and manage SSSIs as well as possible, and to tackle the huge backlog of neglected sites whether publicly or privately owned.

Hence the general cheeriness among the green anoraks. But the paper is more interesting even than the overdue overhaul of SSSIs. It makes clear that special sites, though important, are no longer regarded as the whole sum of conservation policy, which must take account of the whole environment and all its activities. In that, this represents the coming of age of official thinking on nature conservation — long delayed, long awaited, but nonetheless welcome.

'Gumboot'



"This is Robert, my personal trainer"

Rotten Boroughs

Fraudbusters

THE decision of the Association for London Government (ALG) to scrap London's organised fraud investigation team (LOFIT) leaves some important questions. First and foremost: who is responsible for allowing the team to waste £3m of taxpayers' money?

The idea behind LOFIT was to tackle housing benefit (HB) fraud across London. Frank Field, the former Labour minister, first advocated it when Labour was still in opposition and he chaired the Commons social security committee.

In April 1996 the newly formed fraudbusters moved into offices in Stanmore, Middlesex — complete with an Aladdin's cave of hi-tech surveillance equipment, expensive cars and generous pay cheques. Former policeman Rod Elliot was appointed LOFIT's head, with the task of selecting staff. Before long LOFIT recruited other former policemen, some of whom it now appears had not revealed that they had left the force under a cloud. Several of the recruits also shared a predilection for rolling up their trouser legs.

As ex-coppers with little knowledge of the ways in which London boroughs administer HB, they set about investigating just about everything other than HB fraud. Having lost sight of their objective, it appears it then took 30 months to discover that public money was going down the drain. Initially LOFIT's business plan had promised that each investigator would save taxpayers no less than £333,000 a year in HB. Instead £3m was wasted before the plug was pulled on what had become a dysfunctional organisation.

In August a long overdue report by the audit commission found that LOFIT had managed only one successful prosecution for HB fraud. Despite the negative report Peter Challis, of the ALG, leapt to defend LOFIT. The report was followed by another from the benefit fraud inspectorate. This pulled few punches and found that LOFIT's claims of HB savings were impossible to substantiate — not least because staff were unable to operate the £180,000 computer system. The BFI report said: "LOFIT, as managed, staffed and equipped was not equal to the task of tackling organised cross-borough housing benefit fraud and should be closed down."

In a panic the ALG hired taxis to deliver letters to LOFIT staff on the day the BFI report was placed in the Commons library — a Sunday, oddly — telling them on no account to try to enter their offices in Stanmore. Arrest was threatened for those who disobeyed. Some LOFIT staff were taken to police stations for questioning and all were given four weeks' pay and told their services were no longer required.

Despite the obvious failure, it appears no one is to be held responsible for the fiasco. Sacked staff including Elliot have subsequently been told they do not face charges and writs for wrongful arrest are now threatened.

However, LOFIT's ignominious end does not seem to have blighted the career of Jim Gee. Although he never worked at LOFIT, not only did he write the LOFIT business plan but he helped Field write the green paper on welfare reform. Gee, who once worked for the ALG before serving time in Lambeth council, is now at Richmond House, Whitehall, where he earns £75,000 a year in the new post of anti-fraud supremo for the National Health Service. More experienced civil servants than Gee may decide his business plan for the NHS is worth a second look.

Leeds

"NEW" Labour's approach to party discipline has been enthusiastically adopted by Leeds city council, where the ruling Labour group has deselected two respected councillors as candidates in next May's local elections.

First for the chop was Ian Coulthard. He had had the temerity to voice his constituents' concerns about a giant £50m sporting arena and leisure complex proposed by Leeds United and backed by shareholders including, er, Leeds city council (*Eyes passim*).

Now race equality chairwoman Norma Hutchinson has also been thrown overboard — a decision that will leave the city's main black community in Chapeltown without a single black councillor and which hardly fits the authority's "inclusive" rhetoric. Her crime appears to be that she was lukewarm in her backing of the local MP, the Blairite darling Fabian Hamilton, who replaced the supposedly unacceptable face of Labour, Liz Davies. However, Coun Hutchinson's deselection may have to be run again after it was found that invalid votes had been counted.

Given that Leeds' soft left but independently minded Euro MP Michael McGowan has also effectively been deselected under the new "party list" system, it seems there might soon be a place in the city's Labour party for Dolly the Sheep.

Anglesey

Less than 18 months after proclaiming he had "the best job in the world", Anglesey council's chief executive Leon Gibson has asked for early retirement on grounds of ill health.

The council's staff sub-committee duly allowed him that privilege last week. In a statement, council leader William John Williams was at pains to point out that the council would not be paying Gibson a penny more than it had to: he had not been given a "golden handshake".

However, by allowing him more than six years' enhancement on his pension, the committee has ensured that the council's pension fund must cough up an extraordinary amount. Taxpayers will ultimately pay for this largesse as the fund will need increased contributions from the council to make up the shortfall. This has been conservatively estimated at £200,000.

The sub-committee decision has angered the Plaid Cymru opposition. Gibson was being investigated by a disciplinary panel for various matters uncovered by a district auditor's report earlier this year. He was also being investigated by the charity commission for his involvement in a dodgy land deal. Coincidentally, his last day at work, 22 July, was the day before an HTV programme which revealed that he had concealed matters from a council committee.

Pseuds Corner

Chaos finds me wherever I go like a brown magnet. When I was making the film [*Buffalo 66*] though, I wanted all my problems to go away. A film is like a zillion opportunities to satisfy your sensibilities. And each time you succeed it's fantastic, but even one tiny failure is unbearable. Filmmaking is like running from the cops and if you even slow down, they'll catch you. So you run until you die.

VINCENT GALLO
Buffalo 66 website

The £100,000 event [Duckworth's centenary celebration] was organised by Biddy Cash, the wife of Bill Cash, the Tory MP, and her daughter Laetitia, a former Deb of the Year and flatmate of Jemima Khan...

Mrs Cash said yesterday: "Many people have said it was the publishing party of the decade. It was enormous fun and set a new tempo for the publishing world into the new millennium." Mrs and Miss Cash called in the expertise of Charlotte Clark, of Inca Productions, a party planner who was at art college with Laetitia, to organise the celebration.

She themed the party around a marsh and guests arriving at the ballroom were treated to a soundtrack of ducks swimming in water and flying. The sound of gunshots indicated dinner was beginning. She said: "We wanted a chic, clean, modern marshlike setting for guests entering the Dorchester referring to the past and future of Duckworth. It was beautifully done."

The Times

The reason my lips are moving is because I am trying to unravel the Greek alphabet. And the reason I burst into tears is because occasionally I succeed, and a word will emerge from the orthographic darkness, and bring with it such a myriad of associations, such a singing, planetary music of connections, like tendrils, like roots, like guy-wires, that bursting into tears seems the only thing to do.

MICHAEL BYWATER
Independent on Sunday

Chairs, say Charlotte and Peter Fiell in their important study Modern Chairs, "reflect the aspirations and socio-political viewpoints of their owners, laying bare their personalities and their social class. More than any other furniture type, the chair offers an insight into the souls of men."

Independent

DR WOLF – Journey Between the Two Worlds
The veil between the physical world and the spirit world is thinning. In this workshop, we will come together to use this opportune time that elders of many nations have long awaited.

We will learn breathing techniques of Chinese Taoists, learn the journeying ways of naive Americans, and self-care techniques of Tibetan monks to deepen inward connection and universal attunement. This work, its wisdom and practical tools, will carry you beyond the physical realm into and through the astral realm where you can receive individual teachings, knowledge and answers.

PLEASE WEAR COMFORTABLE CLOTHING AND BRING A CUSHION, BLANKET, NOTEBOOK AND PEN, A CANDLE AND A FEATHER. Please eat lightly the day before. Pay particular attention to your dreams the night before you arrive, write them down, call out your ancestors and observe the ease, or difficulty of arriving on time.

Programme, The College of Physic Studies

CONTRIBUTORS: Colin Bertram, Catherine Feeny, Tony Woolf, Theresa O'Shea, James Craven.

£10 paid for entries

MOVIE UPDATE

MOVE over Tom Cruise: here comes Mohamed the Movie.

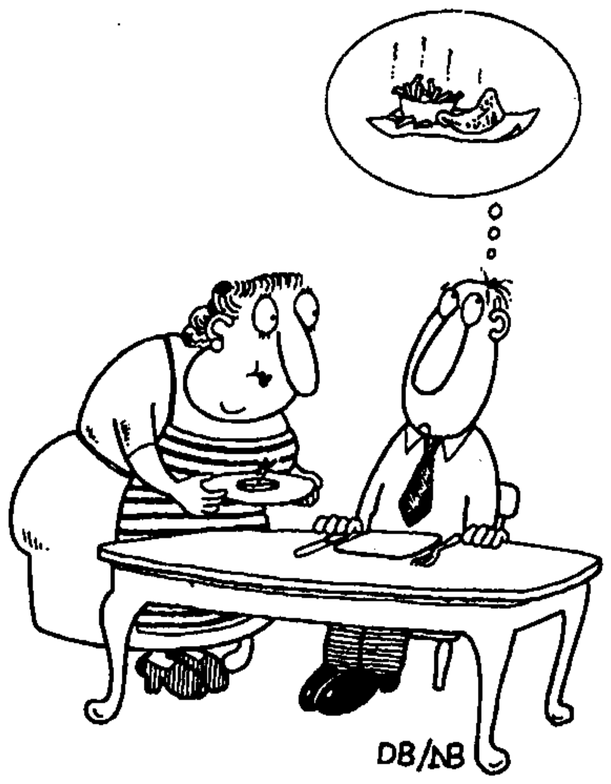
According to a ludicrously credulous report in the *Daily Record*, "several studios are in negotiations with Glasgow based Cassean Productions who want to make a £30m film about the Harrods tycoon. The film claims Fayed, whose son Dodi died along with Princes Diana, was being spied on by the British secret services...

"...Part of the film is almost certain to be shot in Scotland as Mr al Fayed has a home here, and recently said he would like a Scottish passport."

Indeed he did. "Home" is a castle and 68,000 acres of land; and as we reported in *Eye* 961, Fayed's desire for Celtic identity may be partly explained by his fear that the new assembly in Edinburgh will introduce land reforms that affect absentee landlords (and fugg up his shooting, fishing and field sports).

A spokesman for Cassean is quoted as saying: "It'll be the biggest film produced in Scotland by Scots since *Rob Roy*." Leaving aside the comparison — *Rob Roy* flopped at the box office — the claimed budget means only a fool would back such a venture. As Laurie Mayer, speaking from the Harrods Electronic Surveillance Unit and part-time press office said: "We are following the project with interest and would welcome anything which portrays Mohamed al Fayed fairly."

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Another day, another Delia

MUSEUM NEWS

STUART BESWICK, the senior financial manager summarily dismissed over a £100,000 hole in the accounts of the Natural History Museum, is by no means the first employee to have left the museum in unhappy circumstances.

The record of irregularities, including dishonesty, among office staff during the reign of director Neil "And Pray" Chalmers over the last 10 years has been, well, really quite appalling. Only efficient spin-doctoring and a burgeoning press office have kept the scandals out of the newspapers.

Beswick, former deputy head of visitor services, was number two in the department which oversees ticket and guide sales to 1.8 million visitors a year. Last year two employees of the finance section were summarily dismissed for irregularities with the till. Not long before that museum secretary Julian Legg (the second most important person in the museum) was dismissed following "irreconcilable" differences with the director. Staff have never been told what those differences were. Another senior staff member was sacked after being found to be using museum time and facilities to pursue his own business interests. And so on.

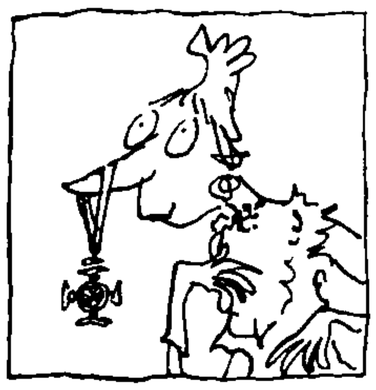
The scientific staff, many of them world authorities on animals or plants, look on appalled. One told the *Eye*: "The proceeds of our hard-won research grants are going towards making good budget deficits produced by incompetence and thievery."

The trustees, meanwhile, seem blasé about the scale of wrongdoing at the museum. Only a cynic would trace such short-sightedness to the fact that one ex-trustee, Gerald Ronson, was himself banged up for his part in the Guinness scandal. Until the Thatcher years it would have been unthinkable that a trustee of a national museum could have been a jailbird. Now it seems likely his example will be emulated by at least one employee.

When asked about the record of dismissals, the museum's chief press officer Susan Barber said our story contained "serious inaccuracies" — but declined to identify any. "If dishonesty is discovered matters are put in the hands of the police," she said, refusing to comment on individual cases. "Such things are private matters between the individuals concerned and the museum." This will no doubt reassure taxpayers whose money keeps the Natural History Museum going.

O·B·N

"Stunning Camilla Parker Bowles won the style stakes yesterday with her outfit of a sky blue hat and matching fitted skirt suit. It was a fashion triumph, especially when teamed with her warm smile."



AMBER GRAALFAND
Mirror

"Peter Phillips... is not classically good-looking the way Prince William is, but rugged, more Bruce Willis than Rob Lowe. London teens may swoon over Prince William, but out in the horsey British countryside, it's Will's robust, sports-loving cousin who gets the boots and saddle set lathered up. Battling in a rugby scrum or simply cruising behind the wheel of his Land Rover, Peter makes a strapping impression."

People Magazine

JUST PUBLISHED!
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NOW IN COLLECTED FORM. The thoughts, sermons and notes from the new vicar of St Albion – known to us all simply as Tony! £4.99

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On sale now at W. H. Smugs and most other bookshops

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW

Letters

Unholy union?

Sir,

I read with alarm your report regarding the continuing plight of Mr Frank Wheeler (BUS PENSIONS: ANOTHER PATHETIC EXCUSE WILL BE ALONG SHORTLY, Footnotes, 962). As a member of the RMT I was alarmed to see you highlight two members as possibly assisting with the stalling of this case.

I have written to the general-secretary requesting information regarding this alleged collusion. It worries me that not only is this a Labour administration blocking progress but that a trade union could be assisting.

Yours faithfully,
MR C. SMART,

Caerphilly.

Anagram

Sir

In case it has escaped your notice: Ron Davies MP = I'm no sad perv.

Yours faithfully,
JEREMY PATTISON

Via e-mail.

Road to ruin

Sir,

Why does John Prescott get such a good press from the press?

For example, In The Tearoom tells us: "Prescott's ambitious wheeze to banish congestion from the roads is stuck in a legislative traffic jam." Good old Prescott! Naughty old bureaucrats, treasury, whatever!!

The truth is that Prescott's white paper on transport and his "New Deal for Trunk Roads in England" are cleverly spun confidence tricks. The touchstone of "environmentalism" in transport is how many roads will actually be built. Prescott inherited 156 roads from the Tories and he is going to build all 156 of them — that's what it says in a "New Deal for Trunk Roads in England".

So why does he get such a good press from the press? Because you hacks are too lazy to actually read the documents: you just read the headings and mislead the whole country.

NINA TUCKMAN,

London N19.

The Birt Bootlicking Corporation

Sir,

This week's PRAVDARIEL contains a photograph of a smiling John Birt collecting his knighthood. The caption below informs us that the received his gong "in recognition of his contribution towards the repositioning of the BBC for the digital future".

Says who? The Palace or the politburo?

Yours faithfully,
JAMES PICKERING,

London SW6.

Piloti—Dontchalovehim?

Sir,

Re: Sheringham Lifeboat Museum Saga. We were very surprised and highly gratified that the story of the Sheringham town council's lifeboat museum found its way into your columns (thanks to Pilotus in Nooks and Crannies [sic]).

You joined the distinguished company of English Heritage, the Victorian Society, the Georgian Group, the Council for British Archaeology, the Ancient Monuments Society, Save Britain's Heritage, Norfolk county council's conservation officer, and the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages, who all helped our members, townsfolk and local fishermen to ditch this mad scheme to demolish an important part of our heritage. We now hope, having saved the old fishermen's sheds (not actually listed nationally, but worthy of being on a local list if one existed), to restore and transform them into a fishing museum for which we actually have planning permission.

So, many thanks for your help.

Yours faithfully,
MRS JOAN LONG,

Secretary, Sheringham Preservation Society.

Piloti—Arentchasickofhim?

Sir,

Why is it, I wonder, that Piloti should have such a jaundiced view of modern architecture? In Nooks & Corners (30 October) he/she refers to a delegation of architects lobbying government to relax planning restrictions in conservation areas so that architects can build "what they want, where they want" it.

Let me bring some of the facts to Piloti's attention. The aim of the delegation led by Lord Rogers (of which I was part) was not to seek a relaxation of planning restrictions, but rather to clarify the role of conservation and the role of renewal in maintaining the integrity of conservation areas. In this way we hope to prevent poor conservation decisions from halting good quality contributions to contemporary architecture.

Piloti might like to reflect on the fact that interpretation of the current guidance often leads to modern structures being placed behind mediocre, old façades which are frequently deformed to fit the new building. The three Richards (Rogers, MacCormac and Coleman) believe that this kind of conservation, which has no integrity, is not conservation at all. We seek, therefore, to strengthen both "true" conservation in our cities and to encourage good quality new architecture to relate to it. Only then will we have an urban environment which is relevant to our time.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD COLEMAN,

London EC4.

Lookalike

Lewinsky

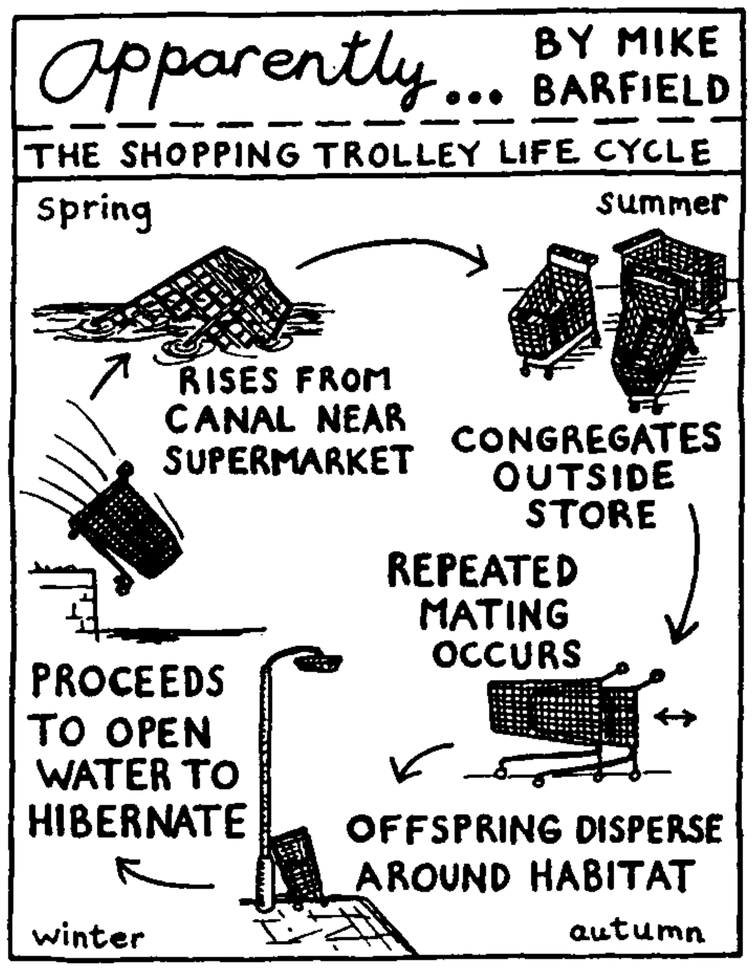
Hart

Sir,

While being held at gunpoint quite recently my sadistic captor insisted that I study every column inch of the EVENING STANDARD. Having already reached the point of near suicidal desperation, imagine my response as I reached the business pages to find a photograph of Monica Lewinsky purporting to be someone called Joanne Hart, deputy city editor.

Yours etc,
GILES HEALY,

London SW9.



Foot in mouth

Sir,

While I acknowledge Paul Foot's excellence as an investigative journalist, I must take issue with his use of financial terminology in "Underneath the Archer" (962). Debtors are people who are in one's debt. Intriguing as the image is, I find it unlikely that Peter Gwyther was pursued all over Cambridgeshire by people attempting to pay him money. "Creditors" is, I suspect, the term which was intended.

While I have already developed a reputation for pedantry, may I gratuitously complain about the many people whose letters contain the combination "Sir/Yours sincerely". Any etiquette book will explain the unacceptability of such usage.

Yours faithfully,
SAMANTHA DENT,

London W9.

The lord's payer

Sir,

With reference to your interesting column Lords for Hire, it seems to me that their lordships are missing a golden opportunity to assist those who so nobly support them.

As doubtless you are aware, upon elevation to the House of Lords a life peer may choose his own style and title. Why do they not incorporate a reference to their sponsors? If they did so we could have, for example, "Lord Baker of ICL and Millennium Chemicals Limited".

Obviously there would have to be the opportunity for them to change their title in the event of losing a sponsor or gaining a new one, but that ought not to present insurmountable problems. It would also assist the hereditary peerage who have the disadvantage of a title chosen by a predecessor, thus one could have "the Earl of Arran and Institute of Waste Management".

Yours ever,
JOHN MAXWELL,

Halebank, Cheshire.

Count on them?

Sir,

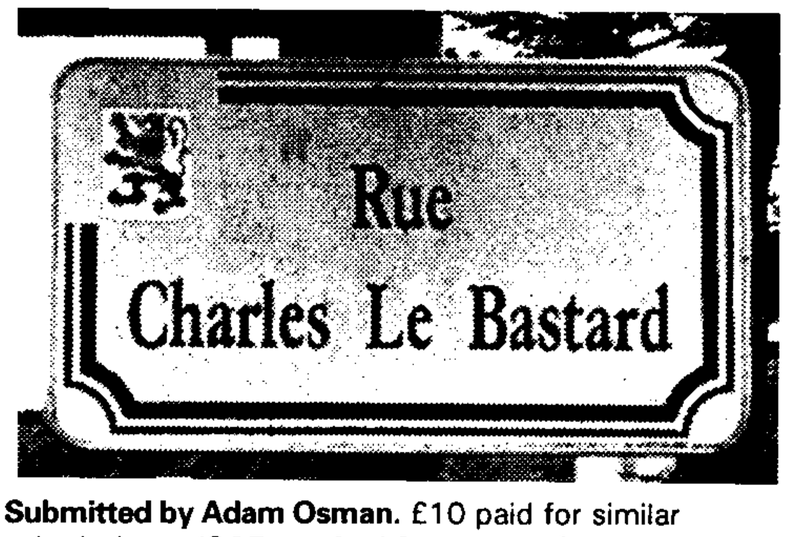
M.D. need not worry too much about the theoretical heart surgeon who botches only four operations in every hundred, and fears that these might just, by ill luck, happen in succession. The chances of this happening are $(1/25)^4$, or 1 in 390,625, or slightly less than three times in every million operations.

Numeracy is not a strong point of doctors, who often feel they need 11 people in the waiting room in order to avoid being idle.

Yours etc,
CAROLINE RICHMOND MSc,

London SW15.

I-SPY *Brittany, N. France*



Submitted by Adam Osman. £10 paid for similar submissions. ***(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)***

Take notice

Sir,

Your snipe at Mark Cullen of MIRRORTEL was unworthy. The phrase "fired without notice" implies sacked without money. The truth is that there is a stark choice — work your notice period or take pay-in-lieu. Most opt for the latter. Yet the culture today from the employees is usually "I want informal notice, plus pay-in-lieu at the end plus a bonus for not nicking half your documents in the interim, shredding the rest and putting a bug in your computer." No wonder employers have been forced into their usual stance.

As for the £100, while you mock the drink sodden in your industry you still believe that every occasion involves getting pissed at someone else's expense. Why not say "At least Mr Cullen had the decency to arrange for the lads time to sit somewhere and have a quiet drink while exchanging addresses and ideas on future employment with fellow workers"?

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT GOODHAND,

Wellington, Somerset.

Lookalike

Roy

Clarissa

Sir,

While watching "Two Fat Ladies" I noticed a worrying similarity between Clarissa Dickson Wright and Roy Hattersley. Maybe Roy's dog mistook its master for the fat lady and caught the duck for Jennifer's banquet. We'll never know.

Yours faithfully,
JAMIE DAINTON,

Little Urswick, Cumbria.

Highway robbery

Sir,

Stagecoach may think that its coach service is adequate. I think that it is slow and hideously uncomfortable, served by buses that are frequently extremely cold, with no heating even in the depths of winter. I use the service regularly, through want of a better alternative, and I always arrive aching all over my body.

Sadly I suspect that our rather inadequately regulated rail market will allow Stagecoach to kill off the competition and continue to provide users with a pisspoor service.

Yours,
GORDON WOODS,

St John's College, Oxford.

Bashing Bashir

Sir,

I was surprised to read your piece about Martin Bashir in today's copy of the EYE. Surprised that you had taken one warped and bitter informant's story as the truth. Far from Martin having only worked on Louise Woodward since the Diana interview, he has reported three other extremely sensitive and time-consuming editions of PANORAMA. In addition he presents the education series JUST ONE CHANCE, as well as regional religious programmes and a radio sports show.

You should check your facts before writing such personalised drivel.

Yours disappointedly etc,

Name and address withheld.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

Domestic Safety Man: *If the flame on the gas stove is blown out there is real danger.*
John Humphrys: *What happens if the stove is electric?*
DSM: *Well, it doesn't blow out if it's electric.*
Radio 4
(Margaret Hudson)

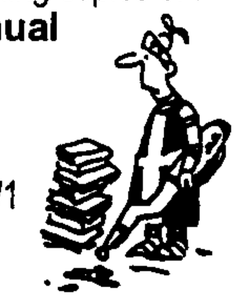
"It's not quite as good as Adams' challenge but it's on a par"
RON ATKINSON, ITV
(Mick Fuchs)

"All Chopin's works include the piano, and this one is no exception..."
ANNOUNCER, Classic FM
(J.R. Constantine)

"Do you believe David Trimble will stick to his guns on decommissioning?"
INTERVIEWER, UTV
(J.A. Dyson)

"A first kick of the night for Nigel Martyn, albeit with his feet..."
BARRY DAVIES, BBC1
(Keith Brooke)

The Private Eye Team will be signing copies of :
The 1998 Private Eye Annual
St Albion Parish News
Colemanballs 9
at Books Etc
66-74 Victoria Street, London SW1
on Wednesday 25 November
from 1.00pm - 2.00pm
To reserve signed copies contact Books Etc on 0171 395 3404



Strait talking

Sir,

Sorry to be pedantic, but the EYE was right and Derek Johns, literary agent, wrong. COLLINS CONCISE DICTIONARY gives straight-laced as "a variant spelling of strait-laced".

Yours etc,
GUY BELLAMY,

Glastonbury, Somerset.

Barnett unFair

Sir,

Re: Lords For Hire. I refer to your article under the above heading on 30 October 1998. I should be obliged if you would correct two errors concerning the reference to myself. Firstly, the company where I am chairman has changed it's [sic] name to Mercury Recycling Limited. More importantly, you described me as one who was "paid to advise". I should tell you that I have never been paid any salary or fee.

Yours sincerely,
THE RT. HON. LORD BARNETT P.C.,

House of Lords.

Postcard from **Malaysia**
from Our Own Correspondent

TRIALS and appeal proceedings in Malaysia are normally heard in English. So what on earth possessed chief justice Eusoff Chin, on 22 October and without any warning, to order judges and counsel to conduct them in Bahasa Malay?

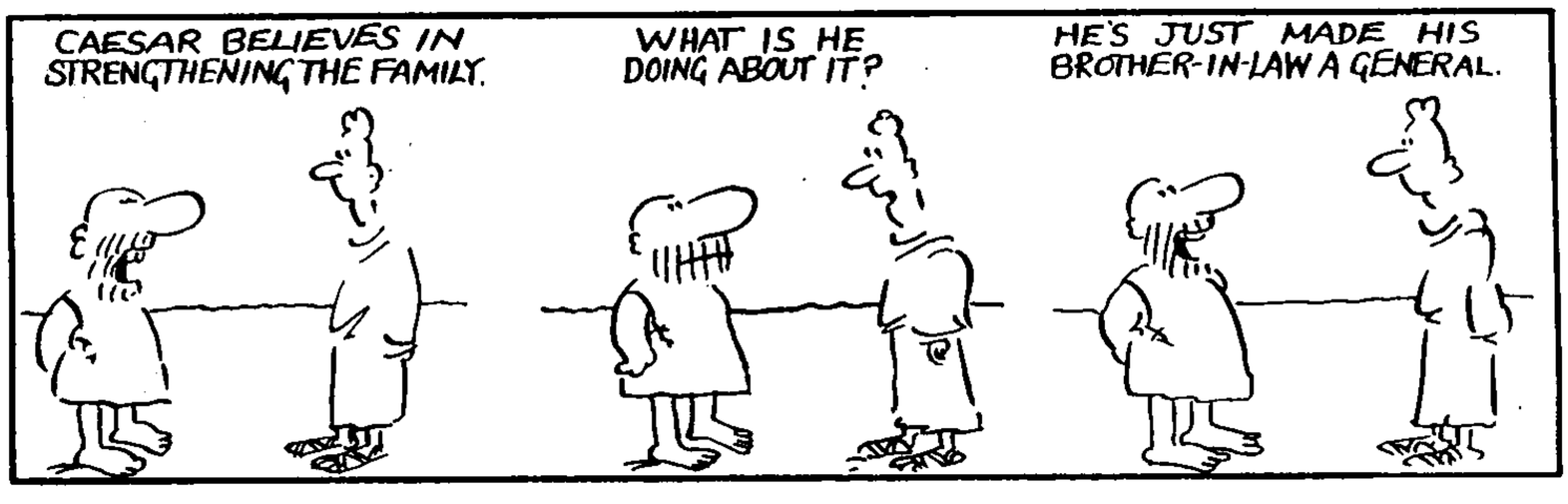
One good reason was to confuse foreign observers at the Anwar Ibrahim trial, who might assume that there was some evidence against him if they could not understand what was being said. If so, the tactic has failed miserably since the lawyers are so unfamiliar with Bahasa Malay as a legal language that they regularly lapse back into English. The judge has been forced to ban foreign observers on the grounds that their presence would be (he said in English) "a big insult".

But Anwar's prosecution was not, in fact, the main casualty of Eusoff Chin's bizarre order. Another problem for the foreign press would have been evidence in a libel action which was due to start this week, brought by prime minister Mahathir's big business backers against Bar Counsel secretary Tommy Thomas.

Much of this evidence was allegations against Eusoff Chin claiming he took exotic family holidays paid for by lawyers who act for successful plaintiffs. The libel case would also have involved further allegations about the chief justice's interesting bank transactions in London; photographs of him holding court in the unlikely location of the Skyline Gondola Ski Resort in Queenstown, New Zealand; and suggestions that his favourite delicacies were procured for him from the Angel Cake House in downtown Kuala Lumpur.

But Eusoff need not have worried that these appalling slurs would come to light in any language. The Bar Counsel's cowardly insurers have taken fright at the enormous damages the Malaysian judges might have awarded against a party producing such evidence, and last week they settled the case. So allegations about Eusoff Chin and his judicial cronies will never be tested in court or anywhere else. The deputy prime minister did promise the Bar Counsel that he would order the anti-corruption agency to investigate them but — quite coincidentally — he was arrested for sodomy a few days later.

HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN



FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● **"It was quite uncanny" Tony Bowdler told reporters at Corio Bay, near Melborne. "We'd just got back to shore after the ceremony, when these two huge planes dived down and began scooping up seawater from the exact spot where we'd been scattering granddad's ashes. Before we knew what was going on, all his earthly remains had been lifted out of their final resting place and dumped on the runway at Avalon airport. It totally ruined the dignity of the funeral."**

Terry Jackson, a spokesperson for the Avalon Airshow, later tried to explain what had happened. "The planes were Canadian Conair CL-215 firefighters, and they were demonstrating their capabilities to trade buyers. To do this, they flew out to sea, scooped up about 5,000 litres of seawater each, and then came back to the airfield and dropped it over the runway. It's normal firefighting practice. We knew nothing about Mr Bowdler's grandfather."

After hearing the explanation, Tony Bowdler was philosophical. "My grandfather died last month, and his will stipulated that his ashes were to be scattered over Corio Bay, because he'd been in the Navy. Still, he never flew and always said he wanted to try someday. And before he retired, he was a fireman at Avalon airport, so at least he's ended up in a place he knows." *(Cemetery News Magazine [Australia], Autumn 1997. Spotter: Norm Reynolds)*

—●—

● "Why spend $9 per pill for Viagra when there's a cheaper and tastier option nearby? Look, you are what you eat and Vietnamese men have long known the secret of ngau pin bo, a single bowl of which holds them as firm as ram rods during the sacred act of intimacy.

Look, Ngau pin bo is not easy to prepare. The finest ingredients are essential, and the most essential ingredient of all is bull penis. The organ must be carefully washed and the urethra removed before being boiled for two hours to soften the meat. It is then sliced, diced and cooked for another half hour before being served with bread and rice wine. Mmmmm, this delicacy is often followed by a pair of testicles cooked with green vegetables and bean sprouts. The best time to indulge is during the autumn and winter. Have ngau pin bo whenever your loins need warming. Remember, eat in moderation, to avoid trouser embarrassment when leaving the restaurant. Make you gig a gig. In Hanoi, you can try it at 19 Nguyen Khuyen or at 96 Hoa Ma, tel: 826-3394. It costs VND10,000/dish/person." *(Vietnam Economic News, September 1998. Spotter: DW Crick)*

—●—

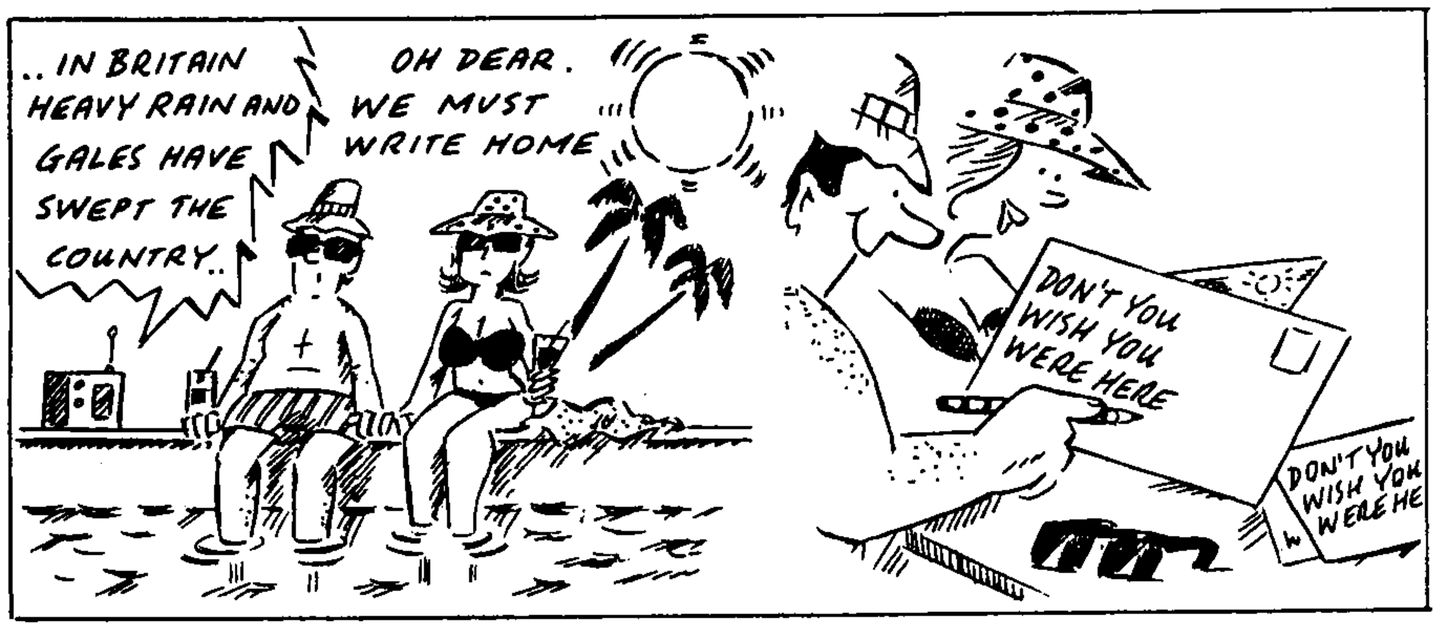
● *"There's no dispute about the facts" Officer Darrell Meadows of the Peoria police force told reporters in Illinois. "Christina Mack and her boyfriend Chester Parkman Sr had an argument. She was angry with him, so while he was sleeping she applied Mr Sheen polish to the top of their wooden stairway until it was like glass. Because*

Mr Parkman only has one leg, he hops about the house, and she obviously knew that he could easily lose his balance. Sure enough, when he got up, he hopped onto the stairway, slipped on the Mr Sheen, fell down the stairs, and sustained multiple concussion, cracked three ribs, lost most of his teeth and broke his one leg. He was lucky not to break his neck as well.

"When we questioned Mack, she as good as admitted to us that she was trying to kill him, and we wanted to charge her with attempted murder. But when Mr Parkman regained consciousness, he told us that he honestly believes 'she was just trying to Mr Sheen the floor to make it look nice' and he doesn't want to press charges. But I ask you — if you wanted to make a wooden floor look nice, would you use six cans of Mr Sheen?" (Winnipeg Free Press, 28 August 1998. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)

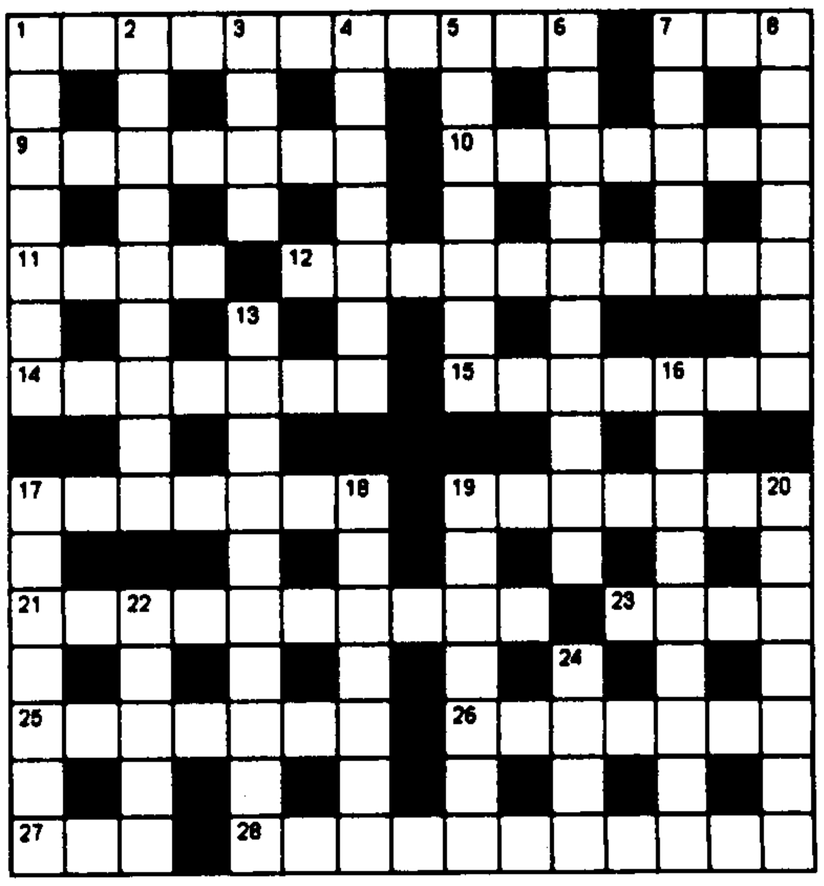
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


..IN BRITAIN HEAVY RAIN AND GALES HAVE SWEPT THE COUNTRY..
OH DEAR. WE MUST WRITE HOME
DON'T YOU WISH YOU WERE HERE
DON'T YOU WISH YOU WERE HE

EYE CROSSWORD 118

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Fax from CID line scuppered publicist (3,8)
7 The little woman needs good poke! (3)
9 Nelson also into male buggery (7)
10 Stink connected with rap is tiresome (7)
11 Trouble-makers backing Blair's intrusion into lives (4)
12 Labour's minor beginnings (10)
14 No place on Blue Peter for such a horsey-sounding type? (7)
15 Peter possibly bitter about Mail (7)
17 Main barriers around Brenda's joints (7)
19 Native to offer Ecstasy to bent CID men (7)
21 Mounted, he pinched penis, roughly put in about right (4,6)
23 Take our mag, we hear, and make out – it's child's play! (1-3)
25 Past its sell-by date can? The devil it is! (3,4)
26 Queer blokes having time for a bit (7)
27 Take on a different hue, as embraced by Mandy, evidently (3)
28 Awfully precious, etc. – like many a Conservative party member? (11)

DOWN

1 Note to 'Sir' torn up – the story of your life? (7)
2 Someone who's against outsiders vandalising phone boxes pointlessly (9)
3 Whoppers are to be found on a Pole (4)
4 Tawdry queen, one who outs member (7)
5 Some catastrophe liable to reveal Bill's character (7)
6 Bimbo fair gets mum light-headed (4,6)
7 Judgmental type of royal biographer having change of heart (5)
8 Private Eye underground, subverted? Shome mistake? (7)
13 Say a drug-induced session with 'E' is bollocks (5,5)
16 Getting an erection makes belly whiff, note, internally (9)
17 Of high standing in California, but not with British voters? (7)
18 Smack right for a footballer? (7)
19 Smashed, so tried to be hacks (7)
20 This crossword is Cyclops's first reverse – pity about copyright (7)
22 Scrounge from arsehole, obtain time off (5)
24 "Public toilets extremely lacking" – TV reporter (4)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 20.11.98. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 117

Winner: CATHERINE PHOENIX

ACROSS: 8 Keynes 9 Balloons 10/11 Election pledge 11 (see 10) 12 (see 20dn) 13/17dn Baroness Thatcher 15 Guts 16 Droop 17 Tart 18 The Queen 20 Plaint 21 Sahara 23 Twitcher 24 Infra dig 25 Cherub

DOWN: 1 Belly laugh 2 Knockers 3 T-shirt 4 Oban 5 Claptrap 6 (see 22 dn.) 7 Snog 13 Brown 14 String em up 16 Die-hards 17 (see 13 ac.) 19 Quarry 20/12 Prince Albert 22/6 Anne Boleyn 23 Togs

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

I can only have one theme this week, and that is the importance of the family!

As you may know, I have chosen this week as "The Week of the Family", as a time for us all to think about what the family means nowadays.

So, let's begin with what it DOESN'T mean!

Some people still have a cosy picture in their minds of a smiling group sitting round the kitchen table, with mum making cakes and dad home from the office smoking his pipe, and watching the children as they sit doing their homework or making model aeroplanes out of balsa wood!

And of course there's a lot to be said for that old-fashioned type of family! A stable home and two loving parents married to each other is the best possible start in life for a child!

But it's not the only one! For instance, there are plenty of people these days who are bringing up kids in very different ways!

They may have chosen not to get married.

Or they may have fallen out of love with each other, and chosen to live with someone else's husband or wife or partner (like Mr Cook and Mr Lairg!).

Or, again, they may have a partner of the same sex (like Mr Smith, although he doesn't have any children yet!).

Or they may have no partner at all, and be successfully bringing up children on their own.

The last thing I want to do is to tell people how they should live their lives.

Look! Of course marriage is the best option. But then so are all the other options!

It's not my job to preach — but I know that many people look to me for guidance and advice on how to live their lives!

That's why I have set up a new team of counsellors, to help everyone in the parish to think through their own personal situations vis à vis relationships, partners, kids and the importance of getting married (should that be their preferred option!).

After all, didn't Our Lord himself attend a wedding at Cana (and enhance the catering facilities!), which shows that he can't have thought marriage was all bad!

But also he was unmarried himself, and his mother was a single mum, even though she was married to her partner (Joseph), who, of course, was present at the birth!

So what is my message on this vital issue of the family? What I am saying is

that there is no room for any fudge or compromise!

We have to make it quite clear that we are going to support the family, in whatever shape or form it appears!

As the Good Book says, "It takes all sorts to make a world" *(Book of Revelations, Ch. 12).*

So, let's go out and preach the message, that we're all one Big Happy Family!

Yours,

Tony

(happily married father of 3, who nevertheless refuses to be judgemental about others less fortunate!)

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Davies, formerly of our PCC, who has let the parish down very badly after an incident in the waste ground behind the church, the details of which are too unpleasant to be included in a family newsletter such as this! Of course, what Mr Davies chooses to do in his private life is entirely his own affair. It has nothing whatever to do with his duties as a member of the PCC, but I know you will all understand that I had no alternative but to sack him.

Mr Davies came to me for confession but he did not tell me the full story. Or if he did I must have forgotten it. Either way it was an outrageous breach of trust and Mr. Campbell (who sometimes sits next to me on these occasions) was quite right to tell Ron to resign at once for whatever it is that he has done.

T.B.

From the Churchwarden Mr Mandelson

PARISH OUTINGS

There will be no more outings of anyone in the parish by anyone. I hope this is understood. It has been brought to my notice that some people in the parish are spreading malicious and unhelpful rumours about my own private life. I wish to make it clear that I do not wish to say anything more about this matter, and I do not expect anyone else to either. You have been warned. P.M.

PCC Elections

Mr Rhodri Morgan has let it be known that he wishes to be considered for the vacancy left by Mr Davies. I know he may be popular with some people in the parish, but popularity isn't everything! Our new rules make it clear that the successful candidate, whoever he or she may be, will be the person the churchwarden and I decide is most fitted for this post. I am sorry Rhodri, but rules are rules! T.B.

A Message From Mrs Jay, Matron of the St Albion's Sunset Home For Distressed Gentlefolk

My thanks to everyone who has supported my plans for the reorganisation of our retirement home. I know one or two people have complained about the proposed changes, particularly some of the old folk who are being asked to move out. I certainly agree that not all of them are as hopeless and stupid as they have been painted, but most of them are and they are only getting their just desserts.

I am also extremely annoyed at the way people are still suggesting that I was only given the job of running the Sunset Home because my father was once the vicar and I am therefore in a position of privilege. My appointment was nothing to do with this, and anyone who says it is is as stupid and hopeless as all those people I am quite rightly asking to vacate to make way for more deserving cases like myself.

M. Jay (Daughter of Rev. Callaghan)

Congratulations!

Well done to **Mr Brown** (Nick *not* Gordon obviously!) for coming out and telling us that he has come out! It is none of our business, but even so it takes a lot of courage and a threat from a local newspaper to admit in public what you get up to in private. Well done, Nick! You are the third member of the PCC this week! What one might call "The Third Gay"! Let this be an example to everyone else. T.B.

EYE EXCLUSIVE

HEIR APPARENT DEMANDS ABDICATION

by Prince Charles

THE heir to the Murdoch Empire, Mr Lachlan Murdoch, has called for his father to step down and hand over power to a younger man.

Lachlan, 22, has long been frustrated by his elderly father's reluctance to relinquish control of one of the world's grubbiest (surely "oldest"? Ed.) dynasties.

Bad Heir Day

Lachlan told aides, "I would be delighted if the old bastard buggered off back to the billabong."

The heir apparent then confided that he believed the House of Murdoch would benefit considerably from a more youthful and "in-touch" communicator who could take The Firm (News International) into the next century.

LATE NEWS

Mr Lachlan Murdoch last night issued an unprecedented denial of claims that he wanted his father to abdicate in favour of himself.

He wrote, "My father the Digger has carried out his duties of publishing filth and destabilising the monarchy with great distinction. I am proud to call him Dirty and wish him many happy years as Digger of this great enterprise."

(*Rotters*)

PRINCES TURN OUT TO SALUTE THE STARS

by Our Showbiz Correspondent
Chaz Bamigboye

IT was a night to remember as the world of monarchy turned out in full to pay tribute to some celebrities who have been on the telly.

Princes such as Charles queued to take part in sketches with the likes of Stephen Fry and Gerry Spice.

"It was a great honour for one," said Charles Windsor, 50, "to meet Mr Bean and James Bond in the flesh. You can imagine how exciting it was for someone like me to share the spotlight with real stars. I will never forget it as long as my mother lives."

Late News

FURY AS ULSTER KILLERS SET FREE

THERE was uproar in Republican circles at the news that two soldiers who had murdered an innocent civilian were to be released. Said a Sinn Fein spokesman, "This is a disgrace. These men are murderers and they are being allowed to escape Scott free. What sort of message does" **(cont. p. 94)**

Cabinet seating plan

SALLY JOCKSTRAP
The Voice of Sport

WELL done England's cricketing heroes for beating Bulgaria 1-1! What a way to win the Davis Cup and didn't Greg Rusedski do well with a maximum 147 break! It just shows once again that you can't write off the Dutch when it comes to the Grand National!

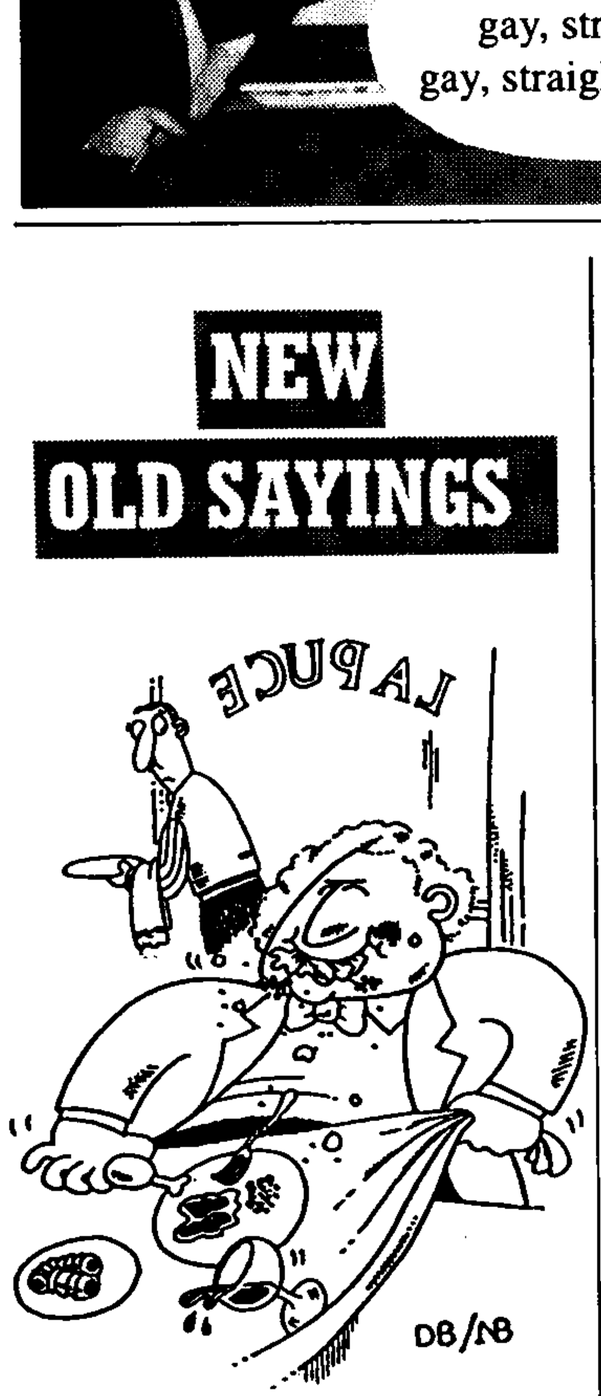
THE TWIN Towers at Wembley are coming down. Golf will never be the same again — no wonder Lester Piggot looks gloomy. My solution to the Wembley Dilemma? Simple. Turn the whole place into a football stadium for international matches.

THE FLAT racing season is over and once again Mika Hakkinen is the world's leading heavyweight. In my book no one runs the hundred metres faster — which is why it had to be pulped and I have had to pay back the advance!

A VIDEO of Sally Jockstrap's 1998 Sporting Highlights from Glyndebourne is now available in the shops.

Price £49.99

NEW OLD SAYINGS



Winner eats all

Letter to The Guardian

As a young person I have recently discovered that there was a huge war between 1914 and 1918 in which millions of people were killed.

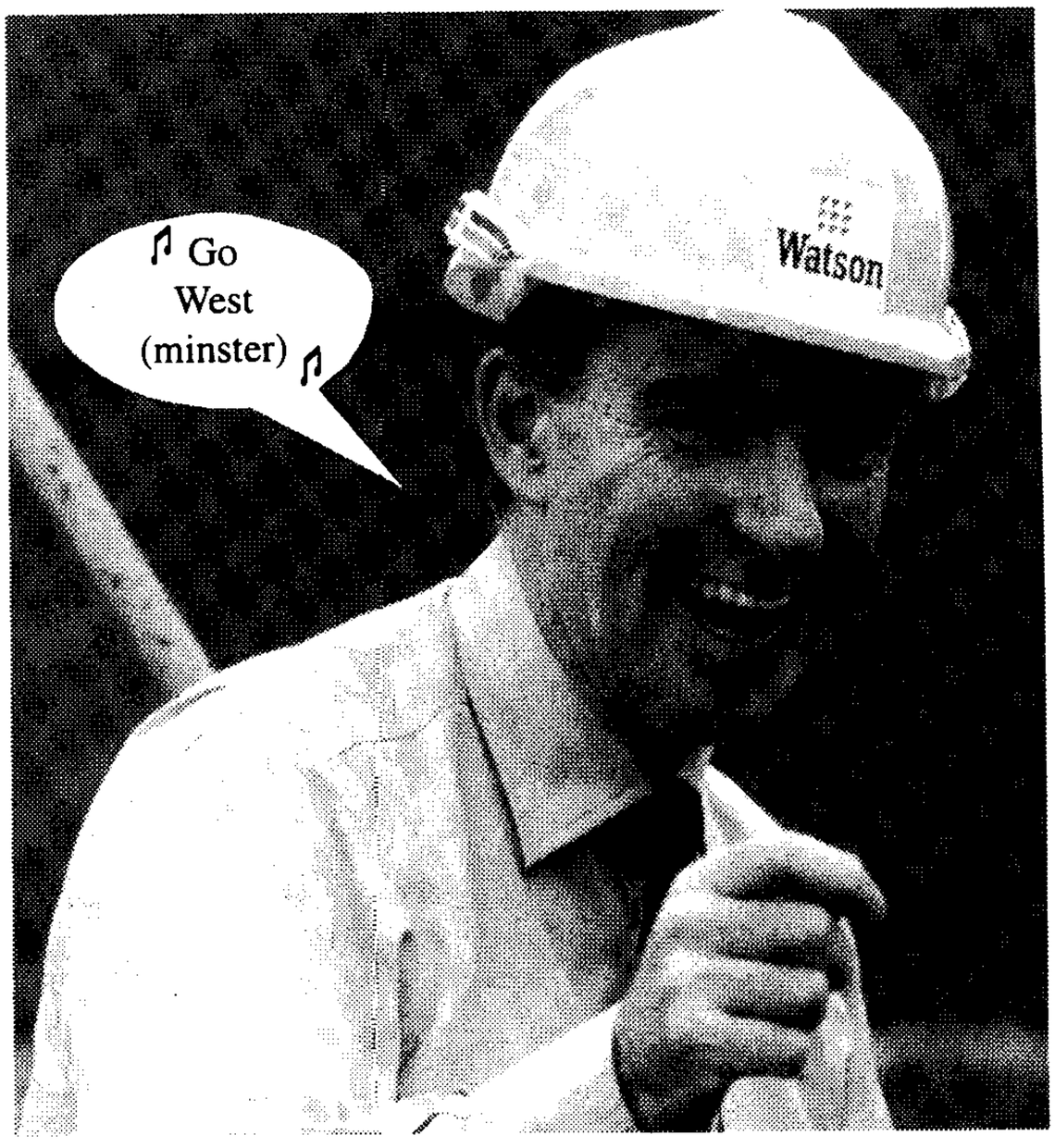
Why is this event consistently ignored in Britain? Surely we should remember this horrendous event and perhaps build some sort of memorial to commemorate the fallen.

I would be prepared to go on a sponsored walk to raise money for such a scheme.

Also, are there any books or videos or designated websites about this war? No one seems to want to write anything about it, which is pretty shocking.

Simon Simple,
2nd Year History student
at the University of Styrene
(formerly Styrene Poly)

VILLAGE PEOPLE TO REFORM



What You Will Not Read In The Murdoch Press

THE Son

Friday, November 13, 1998

Don't watch Sky, it's rubbish! says TV critic Gary p. 94

The Happy Couple!

DIGGER'S BOY TO WED BUSTY BRA BABE

by Our Media Staff
Kevin Filth

LIKE father, like son! Look what little Lachlan's landed him-self down under!

Not to be outdone by his dirty dad, Raunchy Rupert, who recently helped himself to a tasty Chinese takeaway, Wendy Deng, lucky Lachlan is to wed one of the world's top topless totties, Sara O'Hara.

Aussie boob model Sara (38-24-36) is the biggest thing in bras since Dame Nellie flashed her Melbas at sex-mad Edward VII.

No wonder friends of Digger Junior and his busty bride-to-be say the happy couple are bonking round the clock, in anticipation of the big day.

Said proud future father-in-law randy Rupe, "my cup runneth over, or at least her's do!"

"Blimey, what a gorgeous pair! And I don't mean the bride and groom!"

ON OTHER PAGES

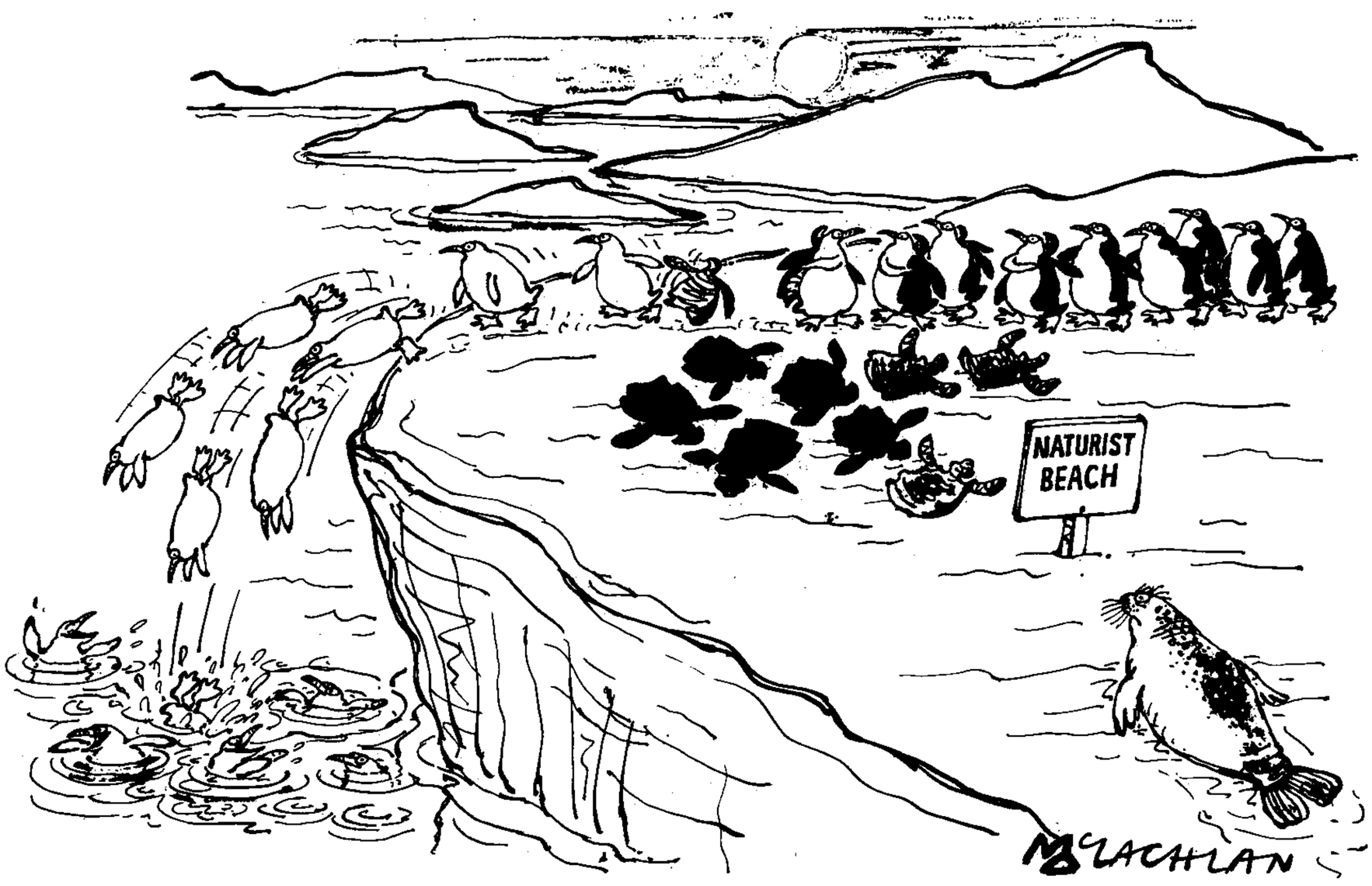
PAGE THREE — What Lucky Lachlan will see on his wedding night (and every night beforehand!) IN FULL COLOUR

Plus

Lusty Liz Murdoch is back on Freud's Couch (and she's mad for it!) p. 8

Plus

Why the euro is good for British business p. 16



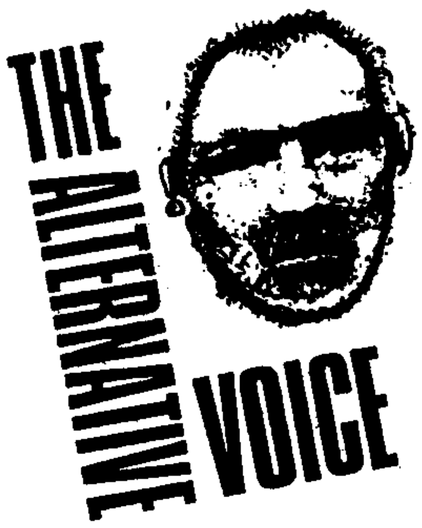
A Cab Driver Writes

Every week a well-known taxi driver is invited to comment on an issue of topical importance.

No.94 This week
Normo Tebbs
(Cab No. 4004 BC)

BLIMEY, guv. See that Welsh MP on Clapham Common? I don't go that far south myself — I turn my light off and say I'm going home. Anyway, bloody disgusting what they get up to. I wouldn't have one of them in my cab, let alone in the Cabinet. You can't trust 'em, see, it's like a secret society, the way they see each other alright, know what I mean? You scratch my backside, I'll scratch yours, ha ha ha. Know what we should do with those people? String 'em up, it's the only language they understand.

I had that Matthew Parris in the back of the cab once. A real gentleman. That'll be 58 quid, guv'nor. Traffic's terrible.



Cedric Spart, Co-Chair of the South London Society of Gay Druids

ER, the vicious victimisation by the Straight Establishment of an innocent gay politician who has committed no crime is proof, if proof were needed, that nothing whatever has changed in the homophobic police state that is the New Britain. It has come to a pretty pass when a so-called Labour government with a so-called liberalised agenda is prepared to discriminate against a member of its own Cabinet solely on the grounds of his chosen sexual orientation, ie by immediately sacking him on the pathetic pretext that he has resigned in shame, er... *(cont'd p. 94)*

DAVIES MEETING STILL UNEXPLAINED

by Our Man On Clapham Common **Lunchtime O'Cruise**

MYSTERY last night continued to surround the meeting between the former Secretary of State for Wales and a man named only as "Tony".

It seems that Ron Davies drove his car to an address in south-west London where he spent three-quarters of an hour "in conversation" with "Tony".

They were then joined by another man called "Alastair".

No one knows precisely what happened next at the meeting between the three men, but it seems likely that Tony and Alastair suddenly became "aggressive" and the situation turned "very nasty".

COMING OUT OF THE CABINET

Davies was threatened, assaulted and then thrown into the street. Even his portfolio was removed, and he was left with nothing except his hopes of becoming the leader of the Welsh Assembly.

In a terse statement Mr Davies last night said "I am saying nothing, except that it was a serious error of judgement.

Everyone knows what happens when you go down to that part of London on your own. You're asking for trouble."

SAD DOUBLE LIFE OF SHAMED RON

by Our Man On The Clapham Omnibum *(surely "Omnibus?" Ed.)*

AT LAST more details began to emerge last night of the strange twilight world frequented by Ron Davies — a world which he kept a secret from even his closest friends.

Davies, a respectable homosexual, has been sensationally revealed to spend long nights hanging around the Commons in the hope of picking up a job.

Davies sought out opportunities to meet other men with similar inclinations, men who wanted to indulge their fantasies of power and domination.

The sordid underworld of the Commons is too unpleasant to describe in detail in a family newspaper, though it involves a great deal of kissing bottoms and other unnatural practices.

COMPLETE STRANGERS GALLERY

Ron Davies was caught out last Tuesday when he was supposed to be spending the evening in a toilet near Clapham South tube station. He was, however, in the Commons and he was spotted openly consorting with "friends" and enjoying the 3rd Reading of the Amended Local Government Assembly Bill.

SUSTAINING AN ELECTION

Rumours that he was an MP had been circulating in gay circles for years, but it was only when Matthew Parris revealed that he was the Minister of State for Wales that his dark secret was revealed.

Davies immediately resigned as a homosexual and asked for the press to "leave his political life alone".

THAT IMAGINARY RON DAVIES MEAL IN BRIXTON

Menu in Full

Alastair Campbell's Soup

— ❋ —

Cottage Pie with Guardian Leaks in Piquant Sauce
Blackmail Pudding and Baked Genes
Coq-au-Van with Savoury Lies

— ❋ —

Welsh Rarebit (on the side)

— ❋ —

Spotted Dick
Bum Surprise
Resignation From Cabinet Pudding

— ❋ —

To drink
Camp Black Coffee

— ❋ —

Carriages Stolen at 2a.m.

Modern Nursery Rhymes

— No. 94 —

Taffy was a Welshman
Taffy was a liar
Taffy was a "known frequenter of homosexual haunts"
But Taffy was beaten by his father
Which explains everything

John Carter, marketing manager at Eastleigh airport, said: 'Safety is our prime concern. A lot of airports are near runways and the airport links are a selling point.

Portsmouth News

Those looking for a more relaxing holiday can spend their days soaking up the sin on the resorts popular sandy beach,

Golden Sun brochure

Those American Elections In Full

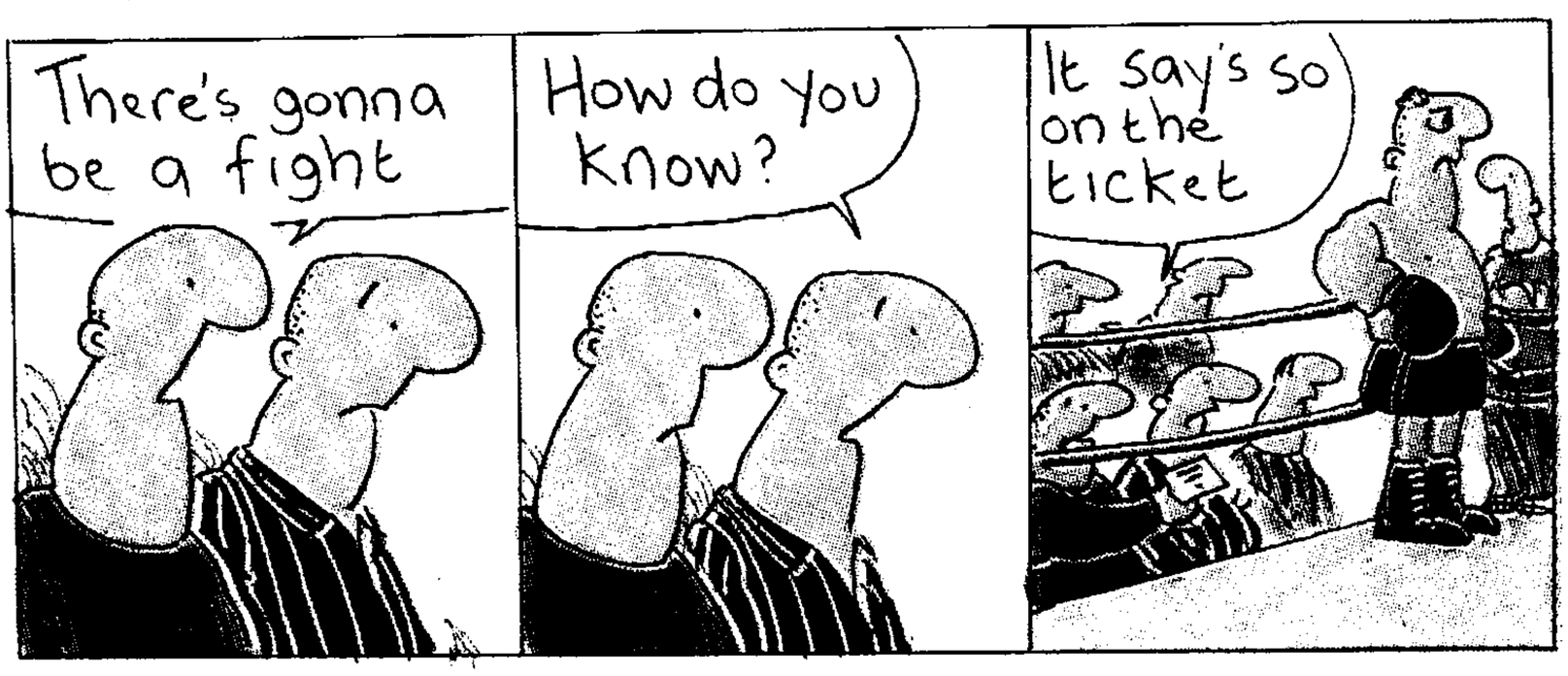
Cont'd from p. 1

Senate
MINNIEMOUSA (Dem. gain):
D. Duck, Dem., 3,418,030;
J. Plutowski ("Pluto") Dem., 3,314,702;
Cruella De Vil, Rep., 3; Alfonso Pinocchio, Rep., 2; D. Dumbo, Ind., 0.

Governors
TEXACO: George Bush II (Rep.);
MONSANTO: George Bush III (Rep.);
MAZZAWATEE: George Bush IV (Rep.);
NORTH FRAZIA: George P. Hackensbusch (Dem.)
(That's enough US election results)

YOBS

HUSBAND



The New People's Poet Laureate

Now You Choose

TO SELECT the new Poet Laureate from the following candidates, simply phone Buckingham Palace on 0898 938 2424 and tell Her Majesty the Queen who she should appoint Britain's top rhymester.

POET	WHAT YOU WILL READ
Pam Ayres, Radio 2's Housewives' Choice	"I think I've got a touch of flu, Happy birthday, Charles to you"
Andrew Motion, Head of Creative Verse, University of East Neasden	"In Cirencester the nascent Thames flows calm, Happy 99th birthday to you, Ma'am"
Spike Milligan, millionaire prankster and Goon	"Ying-tong, ying-tong, diddle-i-po Prince Charles is a grovelling bastard, don't you know?"
Roger McGough, former member of Scaffold, the popular swinging group	"I wouldn't mind taking the job of Poet Laureate, I'd even write nice things about the Queen Mum's flowery hat"
Sir Elton John, legendary composer	"Happy birthday, your Majesty, You are a candle blowing in the wind on the cake"
Eric Cantona, poet and film star	"Les oiseaux de mer Chantent au dessus d'un bateau Pour votre anniversaire, Votre Majesté, un grand gateau"
Mohammed Al Fayed, grocer and philanthropist	"Happy fuggin' birthday to all of you at Court, Why don't you give me a fuggin' passport?"

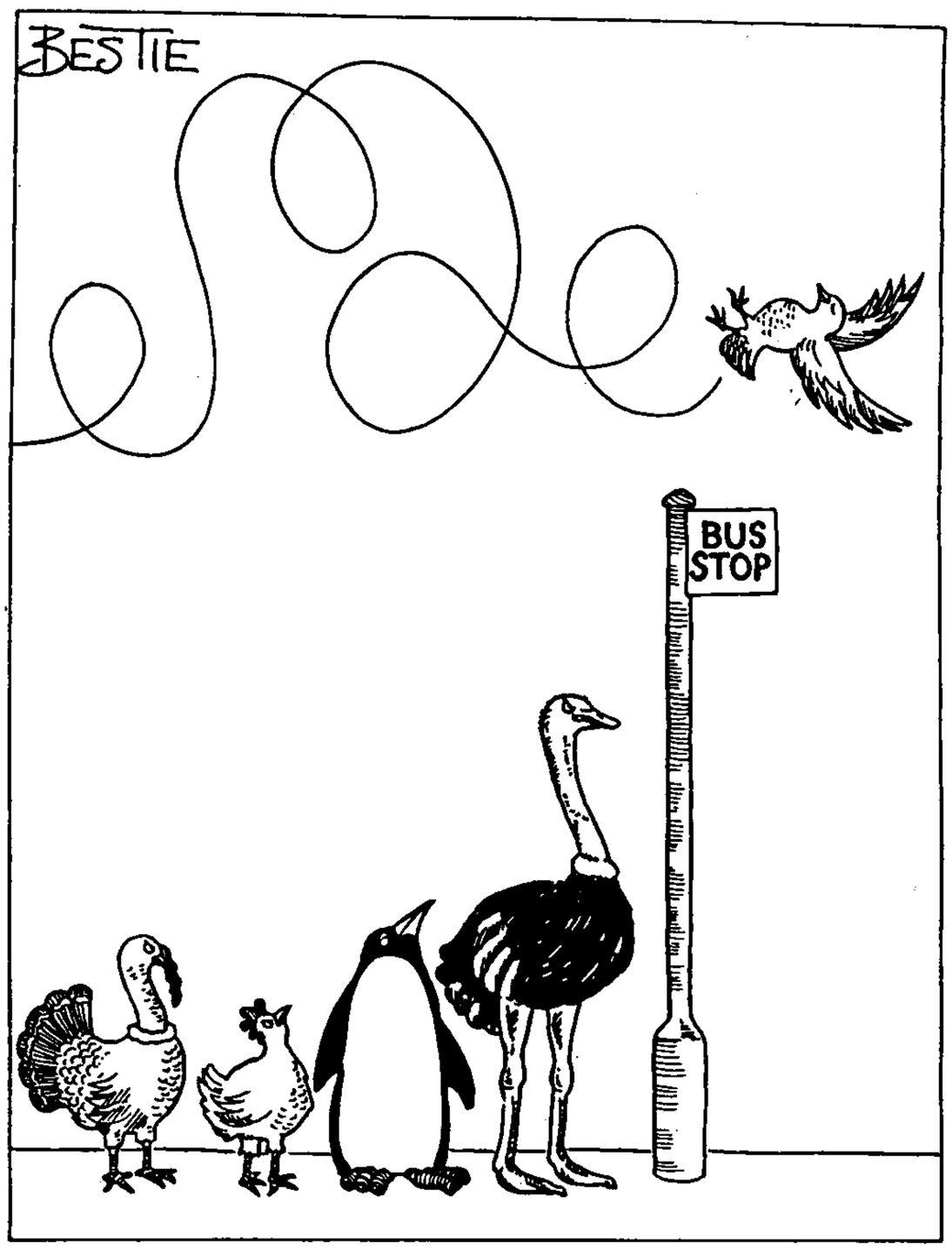
At Direct Banking we pride ourselves on the standard of service we offer our customers, and on this occasion we have clearly fallen short of our own high standards. Once again I apologise for any inconvenience caused and I hope you continue to sue the Direct Banking service.

Royal Bank of Scotland

MATURE young looking 409 year old lady, is looking for that special male.

Heaton & Reddish Reporter

Life of Birds Pt 94



Some birds can be rather cruel to the flightless

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Ted Hughes OM

So. Farewell then
The Poet Laureate
Who will succeed you
As Britain's premier
Bard?

I can think
Of only one name
Worthy
Of that honour.

E.J. Thribb (aged 17½)

P.S. It is interesting
That the ex-Laureate's
Full name
Was Edward James
Hughes.

"E.J." you
See.
Poetry is all
About making
Significant connections.

OLDEST MAN IN SPACE

by Our Science Staff
Adam Mars-Mission

AN INCREDIBLY old man has been launched into the huge empty space opposite the Times editorial and is now floating freely on the page.

Lord Rees-Mogg (98), a veteran of space-filling missions in the sixties, seventies and eighties, has once again achieved zero gravity with a column about the devastating effect of Yo-Yos on the global climate.

Said mission controller, Peter Stothard, "Rees-Mogg has got the write stuff. He can write stuff till it comes out of his ears. And Rees-Mogg isn't just there because he is old. He has recently proved himself to be as unfit for the job as anyone else on the Times."

TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER PAGE

Mogg himself is convinced that his attempt to conquer the inky void will prove worthwhile.

"I am carrying out vital experiments in space," he said, "such as how lightweight can I get without being sacked."

Lord Rees-Mogg is on another planet.

That Mandelson Apology In Full

Dear Peter

I cannot tell you how deeply ashamed I am about the unfortunate incident which took place yesterday evening. It was a quite appalling lapse of judgement on my part. I went to White City, as I have often done in the past, where I had a pre-arranged encounter with a gay man known only as Matthew Parris, the distinguished columnist of the Times. In the course of a private conversation on air, this man made an improper suggestion to which I foolishly responded, in the hope of gratifying my curiosity. I deeply regret the moment of weakness which inadvertently led me into the highly embarrassing and compromising situation — ie, allowing it to be publicly revealed that you are gay. In the light of the distressing attention which has been drawn to this regrettable moment of madness, I have no option but to stay on in my highly lucrative public position.

Yours Jeremy

JEREMY PAXMAN

P.S. Come off it, Mandelson! We all know you're one of them. You are, aren't you? Come on! Answer the question! I haven't got all night.

THAT BIRT EDICT IN FULL

From the Office of the
Dalek-General
To All BBC Personnel

Top Secret

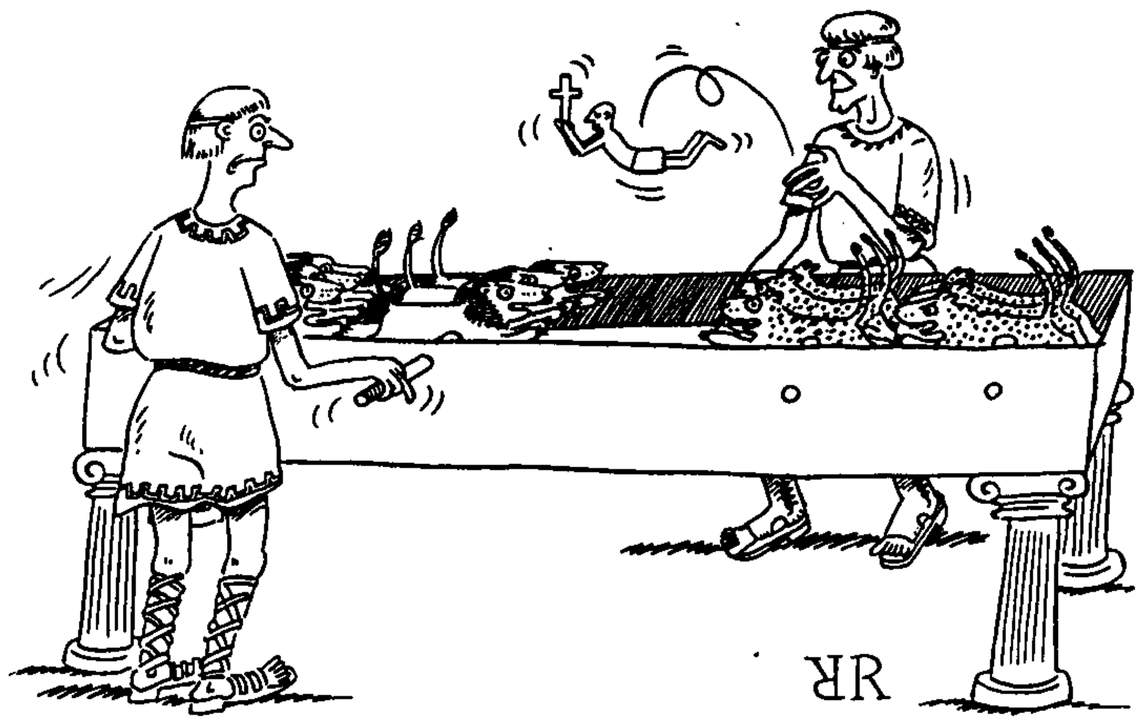
It has been drawn to my attention that on last night's Newsnight programme, a most unfortunate reference was made to the private life of a well-known public figure. I wish to make it clear that this person's name must never be mentioned again in any context whatsoever, on any BBC broadcast, video tape, e-mail, inter-office facsimile transmission or digital on-line representation in any of the territories covered by the Charter, including Malawi, Puerto Rico, Rumbabwe (formerly British Rumbabaland), Vatican City and the planet Krypton. Any employee of the Corporation found to be in breach of this edict, DG/XXIV/7231/98, will be summoned before a Board of Management Disciplinary Hearing and exterminated. I, of course, realise that the issuing of this edict is, in itself, a major news item, which will inevitably make headlines all over the world. Staff are therefore perfectly at liberty to report my issuing of the edict on all news programmes, so long as no reference is made to the person to whom no reference may be made (see above).

Issued on behalf of the Dalek-General

by Ms Ann Sloperson

Supreme Political Advisor (Dalek Division)

Roman Table Games



BBC IN SHOCK "OUTING" CLAMPDOWN

by Our Broadcasting Staff
Jeremy Paxmandelson

A CLEARLY embarrassed BBC management was last night trying to stop any repetition of the attempt to "out" a senior figure associated with the government.

BBC reporters have been openly declaring that John Birt should be "outed" from the BBC at once and never be allowed back in the building.

The management have however been quick to issue a memo forbidding staff to mention John Birt at all. The edict says, "No BBC employee will suggest at any time that Mr Birt should be out nor that his behaviour in the last week should be considered abnormal nor that his weakness for censorship makes him in any way unsuitable for high office."

GLAD TO BE GAGGED

But some critics have refused to be intimidated. Carrying banners reading "Birt is a roaring failure" and "What a screaming idiot", hundreds of activists from the pressure group Birtrage descended on Broadcasting House and *(cont. p. 94)*

Late News

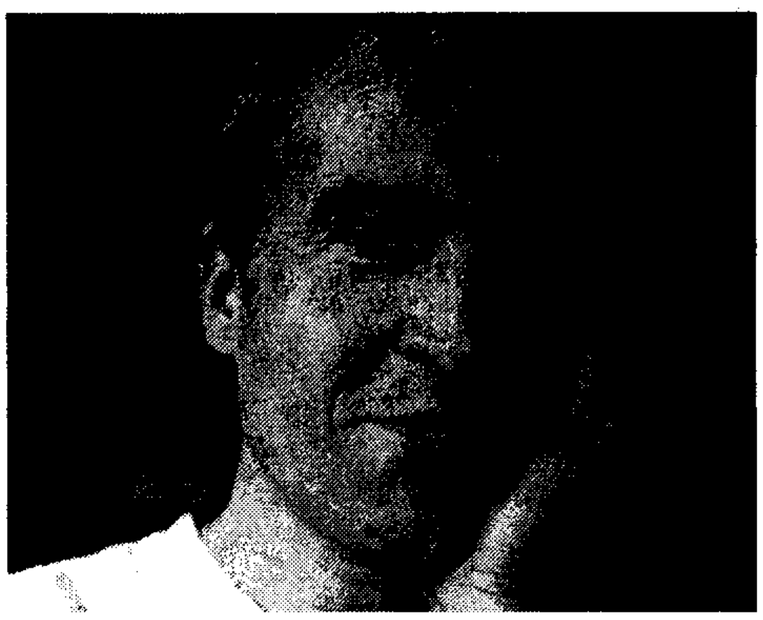
Birt Denies "Close Relationship" With Blandelson

In a statement issued late last night, the BBC Director-General Sir John Birt denied that he had been involved in an "improper relationship" with the Corporation's Chairman Sir Christopher Blandelson.

The two men met late at night in a television studio in South London, but both deny that any impropriety occurred. (That's enough pieces about men meeting late at night. Ed.)

Yellow Brick Road Protesters

DIARY



STEPHEN BAYLEY

Since I am widely regarded as the greatest know-all in this oh-so-cluttered metropolis, I have grown used to lesser minds calling to say, for example, "Stephen, dearest, we need to pick your massive brain! Can you tell us 10 interesting things about milk?"

Within seconds, I have nipped to the file in my brain marked "milk" and pulled out the folder headed "interesting". I then articulate with unerring clarity, elegance and thingy-wingy all I know that is interesting about milk. "It is white, exquisitely white" I say, "One can drink it, if forced to, and it comes from cows." I then pause to let them catch up with their note-taking before reopening the floodgates of fact. "It emerges from bottles or cartons, C2s devote their mornings to pouring it over breakfast flakes and the udder of a cow is a monstrous vulgarity, inelegant and implausible, one of nature's most conspicuous failures of design."

Small wonder I am so often styled "The World's Foremost Design Guru" in my publicity handouts. And that was how I was called by someone who asked me to be Artistic Director of the Millennium Dome. I accepted the challenge with alacrity: this was a project crying out for someone of my intellectual and aesthetic stature, and it would have been criminal to let it fall into the hands of a boring little bureaucrat or — heaven forfend! — a grubby little politico.

All life, according to Nietzsche, is a question of taste. Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein, Plato, Popper: these, too, are philosophers who sit comfortably in one's prose. They have much of interest to say, in their own little ways, to the modern Design Guru. Sadly, though, as drivers they possess an all-revealing timidity. One may surely be forgiven for thinking that were Plato alive the poor little man would drive a Volvo S70 R with power steering, while it is inarguable that Schopenhauer would be stuck in a two-door Montego with a sun roof but without air conditioning.

Taste was what I wish to bring to the Dome. As I made clear to Peter Mandelson in my memo of acceptance, "Let me put your mind at rest. In appointing me Artistic Director, you have made an acute choice that does you great credit. Rest assured you have chosen a headstrong, brave, idealistic individual fired by intellectual and creative ideas, determined to banish any hint of 'populism', 'fun' and other vulgarities from the Dome, a true intellectual who is no slave to 'market-research' or — forgive me! — 'bums on seats'. Well done, Peter! I believe that, given time and a better dress-sense, you have the makings of a first-rate junior minister! Keep it up!"

Our first meeting after my appointment was not a success. You may judge a man by his shoelaces. I noticed as he walked in that Mandelson's were black, not dark grey. A ravine of displeasure opened in my head. Frankly, I shuddered. Mandelson's black shoe-laces immediately suggested that he had no interest in the visual, and that the Dome was doomed from the start. Did he not realise that black shoe-laces were last worn by the mercantile and clerical classes in the late 1960s, and have had no place on the shoes of the distinguished since late November 1962? The shoe-lace is a window into a man's soul. Anyone who fails to buy his shoe laces from Signor Maschetti's shop on the Via Garibaldi in Sienna is, frankly, not to be trusted with matters of importance.

To be helpful, I made this point crystal clear in the memo I sent him the next day. "I cannot continue to operate effectively in my new post" I began, "if I am to be forced to conduct business meetings with a man who insists upon continuing to wear black shoe-laces. I feel the whole purpose of the Dome project is jeopardised by this grotesque, lowering and unworthy decision. Reconsider the whole question of your intolerable personal presentation — or pray consider my resignation imminent."

There are few shapes in this world closer to perfection than the oblong. I am generally credited with being the first person in this country — perhaps anywhere in the world — to have used the oblong to great effect. As long ago as June 1996 I was wearing oblong shoes and an oblong designer necktie, living in an architect-designed oblong house, using an oblong wok to stir-fry my oblong noodles.

I was determined from the outset that the oblong should form the basis of the Dome's interior. All other shapes were to be banned.

"I want nothing but oblongs!" I wrote in a major new memo to The Prime Minister shortly after accepting the post, "Big oblongs! Small oblongs! Medium-sized oblongs! Anything else would be philosophically incomprehensible, aesthetically compromised and morally untenable.

"I have therefore advised the on-site contractors to convert the at present hideously circular Dome into an Oblong, with eight different Zones, each celebrating the beauty of the oblong."

Everything, even the food on offer to visitors, must be oblong. Pringles Potato Crisps must be awarded the catering franchise. This is a bold, brave and far-reaching initiative that is undoubtedly poised to attract the attention and admiration of the whole world. Finally, a word of design advice, Prime Minister, concerning your hair: an urgent appointment with Nicky Clarke is needed if you are to achieve anything worthwhile in your Premiership. If, for whatever reason, you choose to ignore this advice, I am afraid I shall have no option but to tender my resignation. Yours etc..."

It was after I had threatened to leave if Philippe Starck was not brought in to design the lavatory-paper holders in the public conveniences of The Dome that the Government had the impertinence to accept my resignation. It then began to dawn on me that there is little to choose between New Labour and Hitler's Nazis.

- Both professed an interest in "The People".
- Both had only the most fleeting knowledge of Design.
- Both had leaders called "Tony".
- Both believed in world domination and set up death camps to do away with their political enemies. Chilling? Yes. Chilling like the rather splendid bottle of Chablis in the ice-bucket beside me. But then what would New Labour know about wine? Nothing at all! Touché!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

FASHION CAFÉ
BANKRUPT
EXCUSE ME NAOMI, I WAS WONDERING...
UNUSED FOOD TO BE THROWN
..COULD YOU HELP ME OUT?..... I HAVENIT EATEN FOR WEEKS!
UNUSED FOOD
YES OF COURSE....
HERE'S A LIST OF AGENCIES IN LONDON...AND THIS IS A GOOD PHOTOGRAPHER, HE'LL SORT OUT YOUR PORTFOLIO.....

MAURICE Kearton can remember clearly falling near his home and failing to explode during the Second World War. *Kent Today*

The "Access the Potential" project is an Equal Opportunities Employer. This post is only open to disabled applicants.

CSC Recruitment ad

London & Quadrant ia an equal opportunities employer.

We operate a non-smoking police.

Advertisement

Literary Review

Poetry in Motion?

POOR old Ted. Barely has the dust been scattered over his Devonshire grave than the papers are crammed with gossip about the identity of his successor. And not just the posh prints either — even the tabloids have been taking an interest in the Laureateship (the *Mirror* actually produced a valedictory tribute *in verse*).

Curiously, in an age where poets of the kind whose works are toted out weekly in the *Times Literary Supplement* sell in hundreds, this neglected and supposedly superannuated artform still matters enough for people to get seriously agitated over who shall have the privilege of rhapsodising the next royal shack-up, or whatever.

What is a poet laureate for? Well, according to strict definition, to write poems of a formal nature commemorating events of national significance (and to do justice to Ted he made several valiant attempts to breathe life into this long-dead genre). Fundamentally, though, the thing is a reward for services rendered. Just as the Booker is supposed, despite numerous evidences to the contrary, to reward excellence in fiction, so the laureateship is supposed to fasten on the best poet around and hold him (or her) up for public edification on the grounds that a) poetry is a good thing, and b) the laureate can play a sterling role as its publicist.

Naturally it doesn't always work like that. Masefield (d. 1967) simply lived too long. Betjeman (d. 1984), it might be argued, swamped the institution in deathless cosiness. Hughes, as we know, only got it because Larkin declined. At the same time nobody could doubt that each of them knew what good poetry was, or did what they could to burnish poetry's image in the public eye.

By far the ghastliest by-product of the Hughes obsequies was the revelation that Number 10 is thought to favour a "People's Poet", possibly even selected by some kind of referendum, and that that well-known cultural colossus Dr Marjorie Mowlam had suggested Sir Paul McCartney as the man for the job.

Sir Paul McCartney? Gosh, well I look forward to hearing what Anthony Thwaite and John Hegley have to say about the Government's Irish policy. If it comes to that, why not go the whole hog and bring in Jarvis or Liam ("Take me to the place where you go/Where nobody knows" — I mean, how's that for a rhyming couplet?)

The really depressing thing about this catchpenny populism is not its inability to divine that Sir Paul, for all his many qualities, is not actually a poet (lyrically you can find his equal in the average school magazine) but its breathtaking arrogance; the assumption that people want to be patronised into believing that some kind of gameshow voting panel will produce "good" poetry. What was Sir John Betjeman, in any case, if not a people's poet?

Fortunately not even the tabloids will let Tone and Co draft in some young person's illiterate with a rhyming dictionary. What remains? Predictably, several of the most promising candidates have already disqualified themselves on grounds of nationalist sentiment. Seamus Heaney, for example, is a paid-up Fenian and R.S. Thomas a cottage-burning Welsh Nat, while Derek Walcott's heart belongs in the Caribbean. In their absence, the list of suitable candidates for Her Majesty already looks a trifle thin — try compiling a list of 10 serious British poets over the age of 40 and you'll see what I mean.

Inevitably an establishment candidate has already emerged in the person of Andrew Motion. Motion's Ok-ness for a job of this sort hardly needs stressing: still a boyish 46, assiduous committee man and fixer, biographer of Keats and so on. But going back to the merit argument again, why not simply pick the best living British poet, regardless of age, looks or acceptability to newspaper editors? And who would this be? Well, Geoffrey Hill is perhaps a bit *recherché* these days, even if *Mercian Hymns* (1971) knocks most poetry of the last 30 years into a cocked hat.

Still, a splendid alternative exists in the shape of D.J. Enright. As this year's *Collected Poems 1948-1998* (OUP, £15) lavishly demonstrates, Enright (born 1920) is a hugely sharp and funny poet who — a big plus-point, this, in our demotic age — actually writes in a colloquial idiom. He's a bit brainy, of course, but you can't have everything — although if Dr Mowlam had her way we'd have nothing at all.

Sadly, Enright's chances are negligible and it's a safe bet that whoever gets it will be a) under 60 and b) not much good. If there's a slight consolation it's that the selection process will produce a pattern example of contemporary British "culture" in action, in other words dim, "inclusive", horribly philistine and determined to sideline whatever merit still exists. After all, who but the English could run a literary prize whose judges admit — as was the case with Ian McEwan's recent triumph — that the third-best book won?

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt 94

How to Eat *by* Nigella Lawson

BREAKFAST is a coy, insinuating, meal, with an individuality that is all its own. It isn't lunch. It certainly isn't tea. It's just breakfast. I've eaten a lot of breakfasts in my time. Some were different, others were the same. Each, though, was distinctively breakfast-ish — teasing and matutinal, in the last resort *forgiving*.

To cook breakfast you will need to acquire food. This may be purchased in a shop. These emporia vary in size and suitability. Some, like Harrods, are large. Others are a bit smaller. I tend to stick to basics: *pâté de fois gras*, plover's eggs, peacock. If these aren't available, buy tender, amusing (neither wan nor unpleasantly gargantuan) tomatoes and soft, yielding bacon.

Eccentric though it may seem, I *love* hot, fat, spicy sausages, or ones that are only slightly spicy. Occasionally, even emphatically *cold* ones will do. It depends.

A pot of yoghurt makes a neat, voluptuous dessert. *Rip* the tinfoil covering away, *pound* the contents with a spoon, *pour* determinedly into a bowl or other receptacle. Children present more of a problem. I make meatballs out of anything — meat, for example. Alternatively, toast is an inviting substitute. This is usually made with bread, either baked in an oven or purchased from a baker, blitzed under the grill or toasted in a really helpful culinary gadget I discovered called a toaster (*cont. p. 94*)

JUST FANCY THAT!

"I turned off after five minutes. I'm sick of period drama. I just thought, 'Oh God, another one with bonnets'."

— Professor Lisa Jardine on the BBC's new *Vanity Fair* adaptation, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 November.

"In BBC1's new *Vanity Fair* adaptation, she [Becky Sharp] is more than just a sexy schemer, she is an in-yer-face, paid-up member of the MTV generation... Professor Lisa Jardine of Queen Mary's and Westfield College, London, says the adaptation is 'brilliant'."

— *Observer*, 8 November.

Books & Bookmen

■ MARTIN BOOTH's novel *The Industry of Souls*, shortlisted for the Booker prize, was described 18 months ago by Booth's then agent as "unsaleable".

Booth left the agent and eventually found as publisher the tiny Stockport-based Dewi Lewis. The agent's prediction was proving accurate until the Booker judges made their surprising choice. Who was this supportive 10 percenter? Step forward, A.M. Heath's Bill Hamilton.

■ *NICK WAPSHOTT's new biography of George Michael is clearly the publishing event of the season to judge by the decision of the Times's Metro section to run a front-cover and double-page spread plugging it.*

Could the author of this seminal work by any chance be related to the Nick Wapshott who edits the selfsame Metro section?

■ FRESH from his sales triumph flogging *East and West* in Australia (see last *Eye*), Chris Patten headed to Hong Kong for the first time since handing over the colony to Johnny Communist.

Once again he paid a most gracious tribute to the man who guaranteed stupendous advance orders for the book — his ex-publisher Rupert Murdoch. "I pray for him every night," he revealed.

'Bookworm'

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
BOOKER PRIZE
BERYL - IT'S SO UNFAIR... A LOSER AGAIN... IT'S SO CRUEL!
MASTER GEORGE
BOOKER PRIZE
IT'S THE LAST TIME I BET ON ONE OF YOUR BLOODY BOOKS!
WILLIAM HILL
MASTER GEORGE

Eye Editor **IAN HISLOP**
will be appearing at Waterstone's
Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow on
Tuesday 24 November
at 7.00pm
To reserve a ticket contact
Waterstone's on 0141 332 9105

footnotes

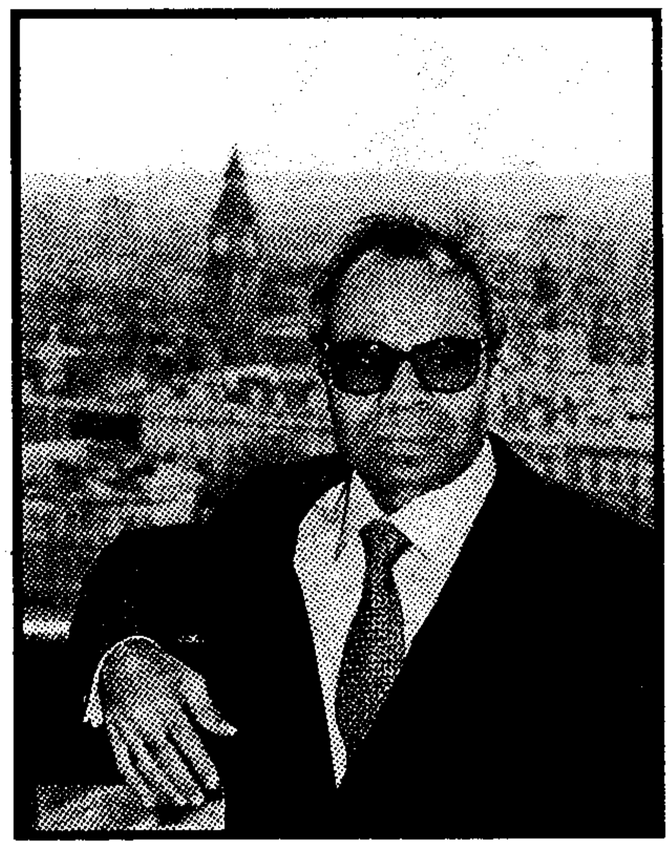
A NOBEL CAUSE

THE "limitless" multi-million pound donation to the spiritual space in the millennium dome by the awesomely rich (and normally reticent) Hinduja brothers was greeted with wonder and admiration in the British media.

Srichand and Gopichand Hinduja, who live and run their worldwide business in London, unusually agreed to be interviewed. On the BBC's Today programme, they basked modestly in the praise of reporter John Humphrys, who used the Hinduja donation to deride the failure of Christians to come up with anything half so generous.

Humphrys's legendary pugnaciousness was not in evidence during the interview. He asked nothing about the brothers' business interests, for example, and their relevance or suitability to the spiritual values in the dome. He certainly made no reference to the Hindujas' connections with the Swedish multinational arms combine Nobel, whose name is given to the famous peace prizes.

The Hindujas, who own Gulf Oil and are said to be friends of former US president George Bush and former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, freely admit their connections with Nobel. "Since the early 1970s," said their spokesman in May 1994, "they have dealt with the Nobel Group, trading in sugar, chemicals and in global counter trade." The statement went on: "Any attempt to interpret such association as direct involvement in arms dealing is a distortion of the truth, and, it is suspected, motivated by malice."



CHAIRMAN SRICHAND HINDUJA

The press statement had been provoked by consistent allegations in India and Sweden that the Hindujas had close connections with the most famous subsidiary of the Nobel Group, the arms company Bofors. In March 1986, after long negotiations, the government of India placed an order worth just under £1bn for 400 vast 155mm howitzer "superguns" whose range was perfect for the bombardment of Pakistan. The lucky firm which won the contract was Bofors.

A year later, in March 1987, the Indian government under Rajiv Gandhi was rocked by allegations in the Swedish media that heavy commissions had been paid on the Bofors contract. The allegations were set off by detailed leaks from Nobel employees in Sweden. Investigations were set up in India and Sweden. An Indian parliamentary committee found no evidence that any commission was paid to anyone in India, though Bofors did admit that huge sums connected with the howitzer contract had been paid into Swiss bank accounts.

This was confirmed by the inquiries of the Swedish police, who became so frustrated by lack of cooperation in India that in 1988 they leaked crucial documents they had uncovered. These were published in the Indian press, notably in the Conservative English language broadsheet, *The Hindu*, and the independent *The Statesman*.

The documents identified three companies whose Geneva bank accounts got the commissions. They were registered offshore. They were Svenska, AE and Pitco. Svenska appeared to be a front for an Indian businessman. AE had Italian connections. The most mysterious of the three, which had received several million pounds and was due under the secret agreements published by *The Hindu* to receive much more (and which changed its name twice) was Pitco.

On 24 June 1988 *The Hindu* published a series of documents under the front-page headline, THE BOFORS-HINDUJA CONNECTION. The documents showed that in the years before the gun contract was sealed, Bofors had made payments to "Pitco, c/o Sangam Ltd" or "Pitco, c/o G.P. Hinduja, Sangam Ltd". Sangam is the Hindujas' trading company. The Hindujas denied receiving any commissions on the arms contracts, denounced the documents as "forgeries" by people "hostile to our interests" and insisted there was no connection between them and Pitco.

There the matter rested until 1989, when the Congress party lost the elections in India. A fullscale police inquiry was launched into the Bofors affair. On 22 January 1990 R.M. Singh, superintendent of police in New Delhi, published a 66-page "first information report" which set out the full background. Para 39 stated:

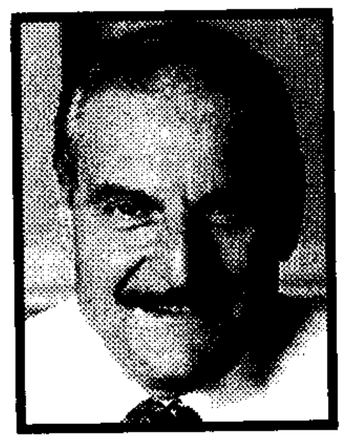
"There are documents and circumstances available to indicate that Pitco is connected with G.P. Hinduja and Sangam Ltd of New Zealand House, Haymarket, London, as set out below." Paragraphs 40 to 45 set out these documents and circumstances in detail.

To clear up the matter once and for all, the Indian government and police applied to the Swiss authorities for information and documents about the three sets of bank accounts into which Bofors payments were alleged by the leaked information to have been made. Swiss regulations are designed to protect the secrecy of the banking system, providing all sorts of safeguards to account holders. Various appeals were launched against the disclosure of the accounts. Among those who appealed were the Hinduja brothers. Why would they appeal against disclosure if they had nothing to hide?

Shri S.P. Hinduja answered this question in another press release on 5 September 1994 as follows: "We have been compelled to be appellants in Switzerland to ensure that payments relating to such commercial transactions with the said group (Nobel) and unrelated to the gun deal does not get mixed up with the documents of the gun contract to be sent to India." The press release repeated: "I have gone on record to say that we have played no role whatsoever in the promotion of the Bofors gun deal with India. Nor have we received any commission on this deal from Bofors."

The complicated and diffuse Swiss appeals, all conducted in utmost secrecy, have dragged on for nearly nine years. The documents about Svenska and AE have been released and studied by the Indian police. The Pitco documents are still subject to the appeals procedure and have not yet been made available. The current view in Geneva is that they are likely finally to be released sometime in the next year or so — at about the time the millennium dome and its moving spiritual space will be open to the public.

Paris in the spring time



PARIS MOAYEDI

■ A company to watch is Jarvis plc, which has all the necessary ingredients for contemporary success. Namely...

1 *A close association with "new" Labour.* At the recent Labour party conference in Blackpool, Jarvis "sponsored" (paid for) a conference for Labour councillors and something called the "leadership campaign team" (Blair's praetorian guard). Participation in the conference and a sumptuous buffet was by invitation only, and the speakers were John Prescott, deputy prime minister, and Hilary Armstrong, local government minister.

2 *Fat cats on the board.* Chief executive Paris Moayedi gets £315,000 a year and last year scooped another £2,344,000 from share options. Finance director Henry Lafferty got £182,000, plus an astonishing £3,516,000 from share options; and director David Freeborn earnt £117,000, plus £1,758,000 from options. Mr Moayedi has commissioned a stupendous villa in the West Indies, which is being built by McAlpine.

3 *A Labour lord on the payroll.* Lord Hogg of Cumbernauld was Norman Hogg MP for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and at 59 was doing a perfectly good job as a Labour whip when he resigned his seat to make way for Blairista Rosie McKenna. Hogg got his peerage and now declares a consultancy with Jarvis without revealing how much he gets for it.

4 *A singleminded devotion to making money out of the privatisations which Labour so recently denounced.* Jarvis now has 70 percent of track maintenance contracts from Railtrack and only just avoided being referred to the monopolies commission by hiving off its track-laying plant company. It is also a keen bidder for the new "PFI" (private finance initiative) contracts in secondary schools — a scheme that is being tested in the London borough of Haringey. In exchange for refurbishing one school, the lucky contractor gets the right to run all Haringey's school services and sack as many maintenance workers and caretakers as it likes for 30 years.

5 *A profound belief in hiring influential personnel.* Bob Clarke, former development director of Railtrack, is on the Jarvis board. John Pirrie left his job as director of corporate services at Haringey... to work in the Romford offices of Jarvis.

COCK SHAW

IN ALL the jubilant reporting of the libel case Gladding v. Channel Four Television and Others, not enough attention has been paid to the performance of Mr Geoffrey Shaw QC, one of the country's top libel lawyers.

A hefty slice of the estimated £1.5m costs which must now be coughed up by members of the Police Federation can be attributed directly to Mr Shaw's serial cock-ups.

In January 1994 Channel Four's *Trial and Error* broadcast a programme about the controversial conviction of Gary Mills and Tony Poole for the murder in 1989 of William Wiltshire. The programme revealed that Det Insp Trevor Gladding had told an important witness not to bother turning up for committal proceedings.

Backed by the funds of the Police Federation and its expert solicitors, Russell Jones & Walker, Mr Gladding sued Channel Four, Just TV and the programme's presenter David Jessel. The case first came to court in July this year. Jessel was ready to give evidence and submitted a witness statement. In a fax to George Carman QC, barrister for the defendants, Mr Shaw objected to every word in Jessel's statement, insisting that none of it was admissible in evidence. Accordingly Carman advised Jessel not to give evidence.

The case dragged on at huge expense for two weeks before Mr Shaw rose for his closing speech. This included a long and offensive assault on David Jessel who, said Shaw, had "not had the courage" to give evidence. At some length, Shaw set out a series of questions he would have asked Jessel had the broadcaster gone into the witness box.

Mr Carman objected at once. He told the judge about Mr Shaw's fax. If Jessel's evidence, in Shaw's view, was inadmissible, how could Jessel have possibly been called to give it? Mr Justice Eady agreed. He stopped the trial and discharged the jury. Shaw and Co appealed, but the court of appeal slapped them down. The huge costs of the entire bungle were awarded against Gladding and the Police Federation.

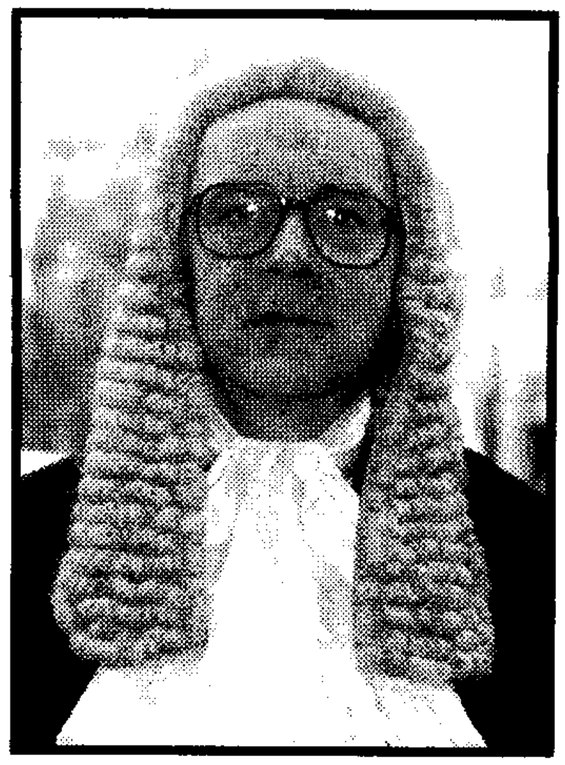
A new trial started on 6 October. It was opened by counsel for the plaintiff, who was still Geoffrey Shaw QC. His long opening speech went on and on for almost all of the first day. George Carman for the defendants protested that Mr Shaw was overstating the meaning of the Channel Four programme. In addition, he was asking the jury to assess the meaning of the programme by reference to material which was not in the programme: an elementary howler.

Mr Carman denounced Shaw's speech as "false, inaccurate, and misleading". So great was the "catalogue of errors" that, he suggested, the trial should be aborted again. Mr Shaw replied that he had been "tired" at the time of the howler. At first he questioned whether he had made a mistake, and then begged to be allowed to correct it.

The new judge, Mr Justice Morland, was not impressed. "It is," he said, "elementary to defamation lawyers that a jury can only determine meaning from what it sees and hears in the programme." Describing various parts of Shaw's speech as "reprehensible" and "insupportable", the judge stopped the trial, discharged the jury and ordered a new one to be empanelled. Once again all the costs were awarded against the Police Federation.

The third trial started on 8 October. After two more weeks and two days, the jury went out for two hours (including lunch). They found unanimously for the television company. Costs were awarded against the Police Federation.

PS: Mr Shaw does not always lose. In 1994 *Private Eye* complained to the Bar Council about the performance of the barrister for the wife of the Yorkshire Ripper, Mrs Sonia Sutcliffe, in her celebrated libel action against the magazine. The barrister in question was Mr Geoffrey Shaw. The gist of the *Eye*'s complaint was that Mr Shaw should have told the court more about the £25,000 payment made to his client by Barbara Jones, then of the *Mail on Sunday*. After his questioning of his client the court was left with the entirely false impression that the £25,000 was a private and personal loan, arranged by word of mouth.



GEOFFREY SHAW: Third time unlucky

This impression, the *Eye* suggested, should have been corrected by Mr Shaw. The council disagreed and the charge against Shaw was dismissed. The full council report was given to the *Eye* on the remarkable condition that it could not be published. When the *Eye* tried to appeal to the legal services ombudsman, we were told he had no jurisdiction over decisions of the Bar Council.

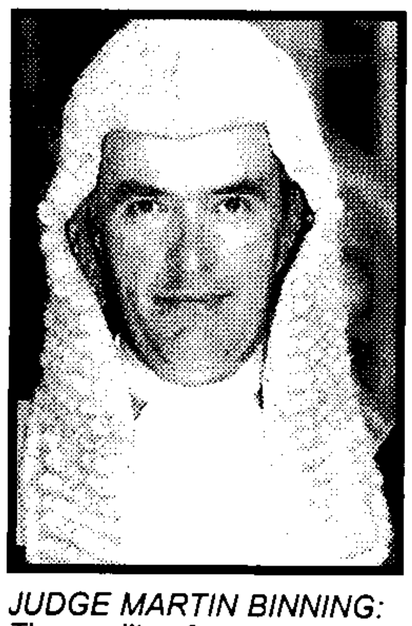
DOING HIS BINNING

■ **ON 22 October the newspapers carried photographs of Judge Richard Gee going for a walk in the sunshine. He was well on the way to recovery after the depression which caused the prosecution to drop the serious fraud charges of which he had been accused.**

On the same day a man who is not a judge, who had spent 11 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit, was locked up on a minor charge which arose from his going to the aid of a neighbour in distress.

This man was John McGranaghan, who was convicted in 1980 of two rapes and a robbery in Scotland. He was sent to prison for life. In 1991 DNA tests proved that he could not possibly have committed the crimes and he was released.

When he went to prison he was a fit man of 39. He consistently pleaded his innocence and refused to be segregated as a sex offender. He was branded a troublemaker and moved from prison to prison. He was abused and attacked by fellow prisoners. His health suffered and he had two massive heart attacks. When he finally emerged, aged 51, he was ill and traumatised.



JUDGE MARTIN BINNING: The quality of mercy

He went to live in south London, where he was constantly visited by police and interrogated about sex crimes even though he had never committed any. One evening in December last year he was digging dog food from a tin with a knife when he heard a commotion in the street. He went to the door and saw a mob of mainly black teenagers shouting at his neighbour, a black woman he knew as Clare. The crowd had chased an 11-year-old claiming that he had hit another boy of the same age. The boy fled to Clare, who was a friend of his mother.

John McGranaghan, who is five feet six inches tall, shouted across the street: "Do you want any help?" Clare shouted back: "Yes, please." In bare feet, shoving the knife in his pocket, he crossed the street and ordered the boys to clear off. There was a fight in which John McGranaghan lunged at one of the boys with his knife and wounded him. The police arrived and McGranaghan was arrested.

At Kingston crown court last month he faced two charges: one of grievous bodily harm, one of assault causing actual bodily harm. Two days before the end of the trial, he had another heart attack and was taken to hospital. He was still there when he was found not guilty on the serious charge but guilty of the lesser one. When he came out of hospital he went back to the court for sentence. His lawyers reminded the judge of the way he had been treated by the British justice system which had wrongly taken 11 years of his life. They produced medical notes from heart specialists about the damage another prison sentence would do to John McGranaghan's heart. They pleaded for a suspended sentence.

His Honour Judge Binning pronounced a sentence of nine months. Which is why John McGranaghan is today in Wandsworth prison hospital while Judge Gee is walking free.

High Principals

THE disgraceful slide in the standards of academic fellowship was on display recently at Bradford university, where subversive staff leaked some sensitive documents to the student newspaper.

The documents set out some expense claims for the former deputy vice chancellor Brenda Costall *(sic)*. In a single fortnight she charged £139.55 for sandwiches and tea; £80.32 for a dinner; and £2,466 for a "musical evening".

On one occasion when she was stuck in Leeds, she was told the university car wasn't available. So she hired a chauffeur-driven Daimler to drive her the ten miles or so to Bradford: cost £80.

TRUST IN ME

■ Christie Colhoun, chief executive of the Homefirst Community Trust, a quango which provides social services in Northern Ireland, is very worried about money. "I don't want to appear pessimistic" he warned recently "but unless there is more money there will be people waiting for services. That's the reality".

There was no shortage of money, however, for the chief executive's salary which has jumped from £66,000 to £83,000, including a £6000 "performance bonus".

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE grinning pullover, aka Richard Branson, continues to specialise in profitless prosperity in almost all areas of his business empire outside his Virgin Atlantic Airlines money machine. And what happens when the recession and increased competition take a bite out of its earnings?

The Branson response to the large number of Virgin loss makers is that he is investing for the longterm when the losers will become winners. But as Keynes famously remarked: in the long term we are all dead.

The latest Branson brainchild to reveal huge losses is his much vaunted personal finance arm Virgin Direct, which bombards newspaper readers with its sales pitch for PEPs, unit trusts and pensions. Unlike the Virgin Atlantic and package holiday profits — trumpeted last month — these arrived at Companies House earlier this month unannounced. That is not surprising as they do not feed the relentless hype of the motormouth Branson PR machine.

True, sales doubled to £637m; but all this achieved was a slightly reduced operating loss of £17.9m compared with the previous year's £19.9m. At the pre-tax level the loss was only marginally less at £19.1m. That brings the losses after two years to almost £40m.

The bulk of last year's losses were on the PEPs front where marketing and other costs are enormous. Here the loss actually rose to £16.5m. Virgin Direct Life, where premium income rose six times to £1.4m, was almost profitable compared with a previous £5m loss.

Thankfully for Branson his Australian partners AMP carry most of the loss-making load, having so far injected £38m from a £40m facility into Virgin Direct. Branson trusts have loaned only £1m. That is often the Branson way of financing.

AMP has clearly and correctly taken the long view about Virgin Direct. It takes years to build a profitable position in the increasingly competitive financial services industry. Proof of that is that the already almost exhausted loan facility (a substantial top-up may be necessary if losses continue on this scale) is not due for repayment until 2006 with interest at a mere 220 points over the benchmark LIBOR (London inter-bank) rate. The Branson trusts have to make do with just 100 over LIBOR.

Virgin Direct may yet turn out to be a profit machine. But what happens when, like Virgin Rail customers, Virgin PEP and pension investors discover that when markets go down as well as up Branson's smug trademark grin is no guarantee of protection?

THE City works on an increasingly shorter memory cycle. Once, a black mark could take a business lifetime to expunge. Now five years is a lifetime among the master of the universe wannabes who invest and solicit other people's money.

All of which explains why former PR boss Tony Canning and his backers Brown Shipley and Butterfield Securities feel it is safe for him to come out of the shadows. Canning is fronting a new venture on the AIM market, property company Lion Corporate Assets, relying on amnesia about how he stiffed the creditors of Corporate Communications six years ago.

Corporate Communications owned major City PR firm Charles Barker and American investor relations outfit Georgeson. The parent company collapsed as a result of over-expansion and excessive overheads, much of it for the benefit of chief executive Canning, known to his intimates as "Porky Boy".

Shareholders pumped in £3.5m via a rights issue only five months before Canning and his bankers called in the receivers in July 1992. This decision was followed seamlessly by the sale of Charles Barker and Georgeson to management buy-outs, the latter led by Canning. Shareholders, other than those involved in the buy-out, were wiped out and unsecured creditors, such as the Financial Times, owed £250,000 for unpaid advertising, took a big hit.

Receivers Cork Gully explained that instant MBOs were the only way to salvage anything if staff and clients were not to desert. But this did not go down too well given that for Canning, the architect of the disaster, it was champagne business as usual. So furious was the FT it continued to ban Georgeson ads for at least a year after the collapse.

Canning left Georgeson in 1994 to find a life outside PR. He blames the Corporate Communications debacle on feuding major shareholders. But then he would, wouldn't he! True to form he is not sparing in rewarding his efforts on Lion's behalf. He is to be paid £100,000 a year.

Investors in Lion, who are asked to put up £5m, have been warned.

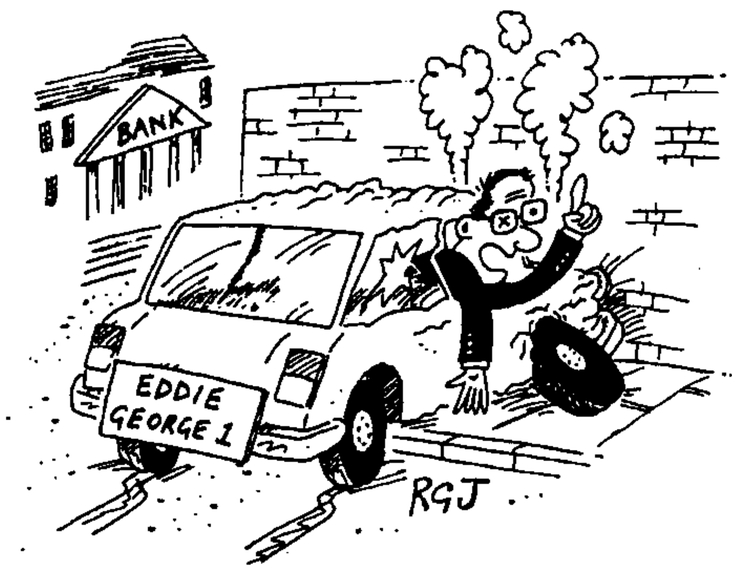
AN INVESTOR wealth warning also needs to be reissued now that Michael Ashcroft has unveiled his plans to launch Carlisle Group on AIM following its revamp with the usual assortment of private Ashcroft interests.

For those who did not suffer at the offshore loving Tory party treasurer's hands in ADT it is perhaps worth recalling the verdict of the Department of Timidity & Inaction's inspectors who probed Ashcroft's role in the Blue Arrow affair. Ironically the man Ashcroft went to bat for in Blue Arrow, founder Tony Berry, is no longer a fan. Such a switch is normal where Ashcroft is concerned.

Ashcroft backed Berry in his comeback with employment agency Recruit which is being injected into Carlisle on terms minority shareholder Berry finds less than generous.

The DTI inspectors were critical of the Tory fundraiser over several transactions between him and Berry which impacted on Blue Arrow. They were "unsatisfied by the explanations" received over a £259,000 invoice for advice which suddenly appeared when Berry was about to be ousted. They said there were "disquieting features" over share deals in the Miss World company between the two men of which Blue Arrow was unaware and from which ADT did not properly benefit. Furthermore, Ashcroft did not disclose his ownership of Blue Arrow shares held in Berry's name despite requests to do so from the company and the requirements of the companies act. The inspectors rejected his explanation as "unfounded".

Given his history it is not surprising that Ashcroft wants to keep AIM on the barely regulated AIM market. Which raises the question as to what a nice man like William Hague is doing with man like Michael Ashcroft as his key fund raiser?



"I decree that now would be a good time to apply the brakes"

SO, ONCE again the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed has blinked and settled a court case rather than go into the witness box. As with the Vanity Fair libel action last year, so with the Rowland safe deposit case Fayed threw his hand in before he could be once again exposed as a liar and an accomplice to criminal acts. Despite issuing many legal actions, Fayed has never given evidence under oath in a British court since he was denounced as a liar by the DTI inspectors.

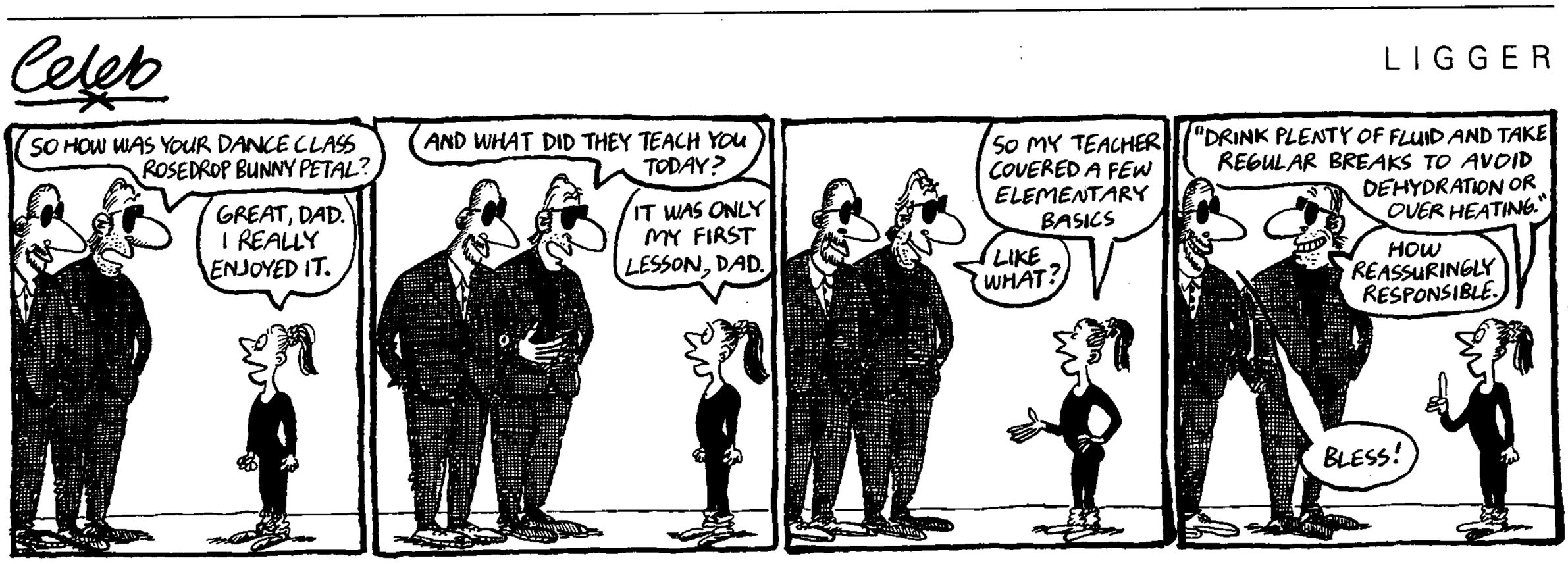
The bill for this humiliating climbdown is likely to exceed £2m including the payment for valuables which until last week he persisted in denying were even in his rival "Tiny" Rowland's Harrods safe deposit box. The judge who decides the damages may take into account that Fayed forced Rowland's widow Josie to give evidence.

Only two Fayed defence witnesses gave evidence before Fayed surrendered to judgment by the court on damages. The locksmith who improperly opened the Rowland box and the safe deposit centre manager admitted that the Rowland box had been burgled on three or four occasions. The locksmith also admitted that Rowland was just one of several instances when he had been asked to secretly open customers' safe deposit boxes. On one occasion he had opened 15. Such services were provided not just for Fayed but also for the police and the security services. Something Harrods clients will no doubt find deeply reassuring!

After hearing such evidence the trial judge Mr Justice Bell indicated that perhaps these and future witnesses should be cautioned about self-incrimination. Soon afterwards Fayed raised the white flag. Not, however, before his biographer Tom Bower had an uncomfortable time in court trying to remember how he came by certain documents from the Rowland box. Like the Fayed defence witnesses, the great historian's memory was less than perfect.

But all that mattered for Fayed was that neither he nor any of his key henchmen would have to give evidence. They would have had to testify under oath about what he knew about the repeated break-ins at the Rowland box. And that might have forced the crown prosecution service to review its decision not to bring a criminal prosecution. But Fayed's effective confession to the break-ins will not go unnoticed at the home office regarding his application for British citizenship.

'Slicker'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LIGGER
SO HOW WAS YOUR DANCE CLASS ROSEDROP BUNNY PETAL?
GREAT, DAD. I REALLY ENJOYED IT.
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age of consent

time to end inequality and lower the age of consent

Since the consensus is that heterosexual men and women are capable of sufficient maturity at 16 to have sex, then there are no grounds for preventing homosexuals from doing so. Such discrimination has no place as we approach the millennium and today's vote will be a small but important step in modernising Britain.

single parents

lecturing on morals will not cure society's ills

The Government-backed Institute for the Family must take care not to become a moralising, patronising institution. While the Government may want to encourage two-parent families, it is not its place to dictate that this is the "best" way to bring up children.

the lords

blair must not bow to peer pressure on vital reforms

If the peers are after a fight, they should be given one. Their case is non-existent and the Government should show up their wrecking efforts.

sink estates

save sink estates from going down the plughole

For too long, politicians have ghettoised the problems of sink estates. The idea that increasing prosperity for all would have a "trickle down" effect on those living in high-rise blocks in deprived areas has been exposed as a myth. A deprived area remains a deprived area -- and blights the wider area around it – unless tackled by the Government.

europe

Despite Mr Blair's praise for the single currency yesterday, the Government is not openly embracing the Euro. The Euro is up and away and we are left on the tarmac. We are missing out on many of the benefits of the free market. In doing so we take much of the pain of European membership without the gain.

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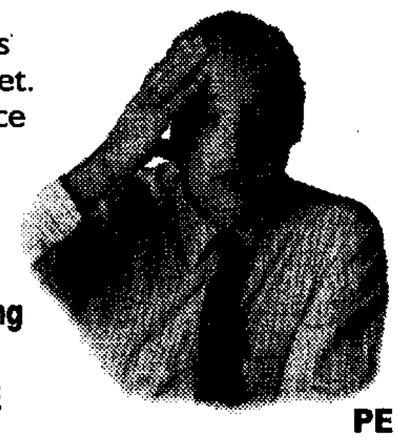

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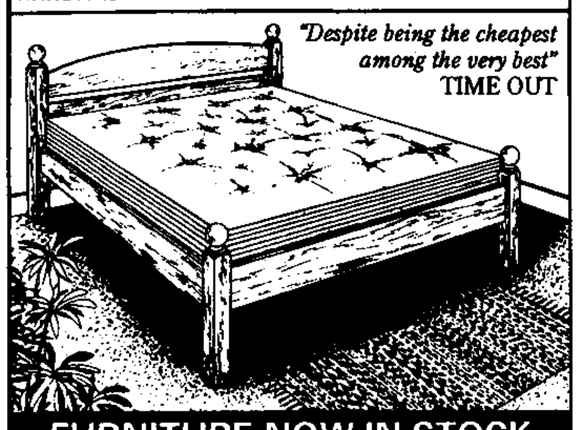

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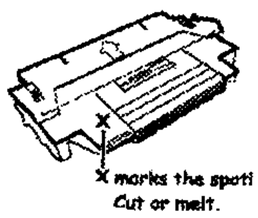

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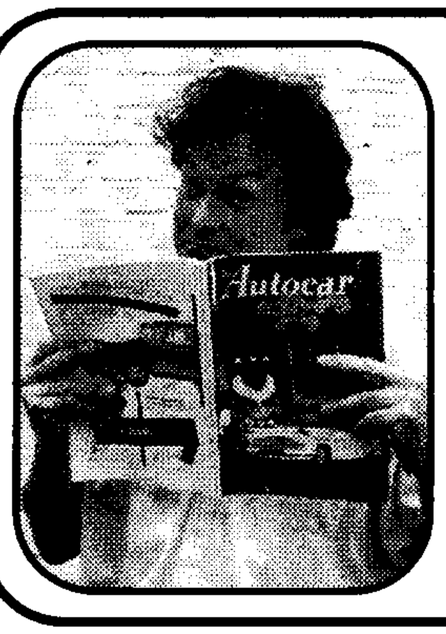

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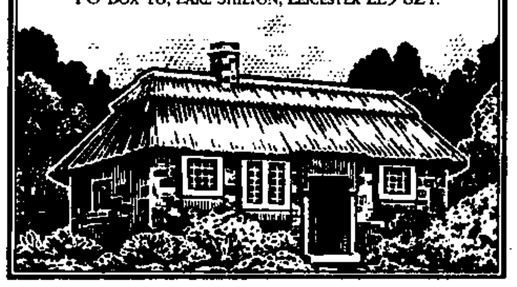

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EYE WORK

FEMALE, 30, resigned job due to psychological bully boss – needs work in IT support training etc. Arts preferred. Good references. Box 0263.

ABLE BARRISTER (53) wishes to abandon life of crime and do something worthwhile. Box 0363.

EXPERIENCED YOUNG GERMAN graduate (31, MA in English Language/Literature) seeks employment as Personal Assistant/Secretary in Britain to interested professional academic, writer, broadcaster. Box 0463.

CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT seeks part-time work (preferably weekends). PC literature and London based. Box 0563.

PROFESSIONAL MANAGER seeks challenge with innovative company. MBA, 29, international project and team management experience – common sense. Box 0663.

PROFESSIONAL HOUSESITTER available from mid-December onwards. Excellent references. Box 0763.

EYE BET

INSIDER INFORMATION available from very successful gambling stable – 0976 730979.

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EYE NEED

ABANDONED, DESPERATELY SAD, unemployed father needs £35,000 or will lose home also. Thankyou. Alliance & Leicester 217-095039-72 or Box 3363.

NHS NURSE, tired and desperate – needs help to escape. Woolwich 10-80-02, 12919608.

POTENTIALLY BRILLIANT male primary teacher. Needs cash to complete PGCE. Nationwide 0712 / 267880654.

YOUNG COUPLE – poverty, debt, depression. Desperately need £10,000, start new life. THANKYOU. B.O.Scotland 809129, 00871622.

SWAMPED WITH DEBT. No way out – £6,700. Grateful any help. Lloyds 30-91-59, 0215683.

DESPERATE MUM
needs £70,000 ASAP
Thanks
Woolwich 10-80-04 / 39241301
THANKS

SAVE STERLING! £5000 will publish / promote pamphlet demolishing case for euro. Barclays 20-47-34, 30458740 or Box 0963.

M.I.6., C.I.A. OR MAFIA excepted funding needed to further career in europolitics a.s.a.p. DUNCAN WILLIAMS, RBS, 16-00-84, 10019583. EYE THANK YOU.

TWO NURSES NEED CAPITAL to start business and escape NHS grind. Any help gratefully received. Box 1163.

TRAPPED IN HELL– stopped hooligans attacking pensioners house. Didn't know in Carmyle ignorance rules. Now can't move – windows smashed. Constantly harassed. Desperate to sell. Unable to finance repairs. Desperate and freezing. PLEASE HELP. Box 1263.

STRUGGLING PARENTS now renting house – desperately need help to maintain four children in private education. Alliance Leicester 72 50 02, 55220081.

PhD STUDENT NEEDS FUNDS for computer equipment. Lloyds 30-97-11, 0523418.

VERY POOR NURSE would love to buy a flat. Help with deposit really appreciated. Thank you. Natwest 56 00 63, 94652872.

IMPLORING HELP. Desperately need 7000 donations of £7 to avoid disaster and provide security for children. Please Please, Please send 1+ donation today. Thanks. KEVIN. Box 1463.

DUE TO TAXMAN and delayed avoidance measures solo circumnavigation stalled for cash and now in jeopardy. Time running out. Donations please to NATWEST 60-90-20, 80765947, Guernsey.

£5,000 TO MAKE a short film about compassion. Special thanks. Box 1563.

£1000 NEEDED. Debt. New Start. NATWEST 52-21-06, 00177601.

STUDENT – NO FAMILY wants to find elder brother adopted and taken to Australia. Please help. RBS 16-01-02, A/C 10031613.

TALL CHINAMAN urgently needs £3691. Will start rumour. Woolwich 10-80-02, 241411796.

NURSE DESPERATELY needs funds to help children attend university. Genuine. Sincere thanks – Lloyds 30 98 85, 0309612.

SOS – DROWNING in sea of debt. Captain died. Please help. NATIONWIDE 07-01-16, 2291309.

NEED NAUGHTY knickers to resuscitate flagging love life! FIRST DIRECT 40-47-83, 82684330. THANKS.

TWO STUDENTS need £6,000 for Ecuadorian research expedition. Anything appreciated. Box 1663.

SECOND TIME VICTIM of adulterous wife needs help to exit from position of strength – thanks. Lloyds 30-18-55, 0217145.

MATURE STUDENT with young son needs £5000 to keep wolves from door – before they take it as well! Lloyds 30-90-16, 1427222.

PLEASE HELP – undergrad facing eviction. £3,000 debt. Anything appreciated. Thanks. 80-12-15, 00986061.

ENGLISH LUTHIER seeks financially comfortable patron to allow time off work for building exquisite instruments. Box 1763.

MISPLACED LOYALTY and discretion have almost destroyed me! Long illness and zero references demand I rebuild my life from scratch as military/general photographer. Unfortunately, negative liquidity prevents a return to school with out appropriate tools (car; P.C. & cameras etc). All kindness will be acknowledged. Thank you. NICK BURBY, POB 322, Richmond, TW9 2XQ.

YOUNG ARTISAN struggling with creative ambitions, seeks wealthy (female?) financier / patron, who could save me from losing faith. Box 1863.

GIRL ON MISSION – help me screw Bill Gates. Cooperative 08-93-00, 16370795.

DEREK PREFERS FRYER'S Turkish delight to Sherry for selfish needs and future in bows. Box 1963.

DAD WINS 10YR OLD daughter. Lost house – gained debts. Please help. Barclays 20-41-12, 60741256.

PhD STUDENT (FEMALE) seeks use of powerful lap-top for research on musicology. Box 2063.

DESPERATELY NEED HELP
Lousy pension scheme
unable to provide young wife
with future financial security.
77-66-12, 13291060. THANKS.

A HORIZON EXPANDING 35mm 10 minute short film about the inner poetry of city life needs a helping hand (and wallet). 0171 565 0051 (9am-5pm).

REMEMBER COSTA DEL SOL holiday that never was? Group of artists seek funds for future project. Contact "LEEDS 13", PO Box 211, Leeds, LS6 1TS.

DESPERATELY NEED £14,000 to save home and liberty. Last hope. BOS 80-91-29, 00462825.

ADVENTUROUS WORM FARM project investor requires £50,000. Abbey National X03863536LAV.

THEATRE COMPANY run by disabled man (unpaid) needs funds to produce to professional standard specially commissioned play involving actors with disabilities and without. All help appreciated. Natwest 60-17-01; 83344748. Thanks.

OLD SOLDIER FADING FAST. Desperate to secure future of woman he loves. Thank you. Midlands 40-42-27, 01369652.

EYE ESCAPE

LANDROVER TRIP from London to Sydney – December '98 to November '99. Fancy it? LISA 0171 354 8327.

CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR in St Petersburg. Prime location flat with courier if needed – 01803 326353.

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EYE FLY

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EYE CONTACT

COVENT GARDEN Singles Drinks Parties. Every Saturday. Ages 30-50. £20. Free Brochure – 0171 836 3070.

ADULT FUN FUN FUN! Our members don't care if you are single, married, divorced or just PLAIN BORED. They want to have fun. Do you? Free membership information 0117 981 9521.

'ADULT CHATLINE'. Unhurried chat with girls 18+, women on line. Message exchange. Calls cost 60p per minute. JCG, BN22 8PW. 0640 611688.

ADDITIONS – Attached? Yet need a loving friend? Nationwide newsletter – 0181 905 3304, 0181 958 9657. Total discretion assured (no computers used). Featured on ITV, American TV, BBC, Radios 4/5. Established 1992.

www.adcdating.co.uk – Free ads.

MARGARET'S special PEN CLUB – make new friends today UK & overseas. SAE details: PO Box 1, Prestwick, Ayrshire KA9 1RJ. Est. 1986.

ATTACHED? Seeking romance? LOVING LINKS is the UK's leading dating newsletter and consultancy service for roving romantics. Discreet, efficient and 100% SECURE. Please do not confuse us with other services. Call DAVID for a friendly chat on 0171 460 7486/0181 962 6300 or visit us on www.lovinglinks.co.uk. As featured in The Times, The Guardian and major T.V. and Radio networks.

PLUMP PARTNERS – National Dating Agency. If you are plump or prefer a plump partner – ring 01352 715909.

CONTACTS CHATLINE
women, girls 18+
willing to chat to me.
Message exchange.
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0640 644026

AMERICAN LADIES seek BRITISH GENTLEMEN! Free details: TRANSATLANTIC CONNECTIONS, Box 2188-PE, San Pedro, California 90731, USA.

YOUNG LADIES worldwide seeks penpals, friends, lifemates. Free details, photos! HERMES, Box 610188/S, 10922 Berlin, Germany. Fax: 0049 30 25299775.

PERSON TO PERSON – best singles magazine for friends / partners, U.K. or overseas. FREE DETAILS (Dept PE/8) P.O. Box 4, Goring-on-Thames, RG8 9DN.

HEDONISM PARTIES, clubnights, holidays. Decadent, uninhibited, exhibitionist, fun-loving party animals. Singles, couples. S.a.e. PO Box 153, Greenford, UB6 8LY. 0181 575 2052.

CONTACT MAG for adults: over 900 photos. APPROVAL copy from: MATCHMAKER, (S.76), Chorley, PR7 4BS. Or ring: 01257 480155 (24 hours).

AstroFree – 0500 820283.

BEAUTIFUL THAI LADIES – colour brochure SIAM INTRODUCTIONS (established 13 years) – 01689 860880

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who believe the rollercoster
could have consciousness
plus other things.
Contact BARBARA LAIS.
Box 0863.

EYE LOVE

SUCCESSFUL, TALL, passionate businessman, 40, Bath/London – seeks a younger woman for discreet fun and mutual benefits. I enjoy life to the full; film, theatre, travel, eating out and eating in, laughter and the rich tapestry of life. If you would like a fun relationship with a man who really knows how to have good times then please write to me with your telephone number to Box 1762.

WOMAN, 37, OWN BEACH hut seeks man with boat or lilo to share sillinesses and journeys. London/SE. Box 2263.

INTERESTING SENSITIVE CHIC svelte blonde 5'6", 43, seeking local tallish n/s lover with similar need for intimacy, passion. Consciousness more important than solvency. Kent-ish. Box 2363.

DASHING YOUNG BLADE (32) seeks educated lady for discreet dalliance, afternoon tea and a possible cerebal/physical relationship. Box 2463.

PLANET-SIZED BRAIN, HEAVENLY BODY: gorgeous graduette (40, 5'7") – communicative, leftish, growing, caring, tactile – seeks male counterpart. (London). Photo important. Box 2663.

HARD WORKING businessman, 38, GSOH, NS, generous – seeks pretty young lady for mutually beneficial fun times. Box 2863.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, attractive, single, 56, likes art and laughs, seeks similar lady for fun and romance. Photo please. South West London. Box 4663.

PROFESSIONAL, GENTLEMAN 48 interested in good living, quality, fun lifestyle, wishes to meet broadminded liberal lady companion/confidante, for occasional but regular, meetings of mutual benefit. Based northwest/Cheshire. GENUINE. Box 2963.

WANTED – BUXOM, mature (35-60) BLACK LADY, with taste for lycra underwear, by good-looking, attached ex-pat Englishman (40s), for occasional meetings in London. Photo and letter ensures reply. Box 3063.

CREATIVE, PROFESSIONAL, graduate, male (37) seeks sensual female for uncomplicated passionate liaisons. Manchester. Box 3163.

ROBBIE COLTRANE seeks DAWN FRENCH for lasting love and cuddles. Box 2763.

PARISIAN, 39, seeks lady 35-60 for friendship / discreet relationship anywhere. Box 3263.

PROFESSIONAL MAN (34), vegetarian, cyclist, wide interests! Attractive – I'm sometimes told. WLTM lady 25-34 for friendship, fun and cultural pursuits. Coventry area. Box 3463.

INSPIRATIONAL, SPORTY, 39, businessman, 6ft, dynamic, discerning, attractive – requires beautiful blonde with brains, 29-ish. Photo ensures reciprocation. Box 3563.

ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT male musician, 45, VGSOH, seeks daytime dalliances with uninhibited sexy female with exhibitionist tendencies / staircase fixation or similar. You're into high heels, sheer tights, flouncy skirt fun, but you need a companion. Any age. London/S.E. Go on, indulge that fantasy! Box 3663.

SUCCESSFUL, ATTRACTIVE male, mid 40s, fit, amusing, gentle and kind, married but unfulfilled, in demanding job but likes to make time for hobbies, varied interests and having fun, seeks interesting and sexy lady as friend and lover. London/SE. Boz 3763.

ACTIVE SEPARATED TACTILE male seeks female 35-45 for cycling, ceroc, walking, cooking conversation, and friendship – Cheshire. Box 3863.

NYMPHOMANIAC CITY headhuntress (29, single, brunette, petite) seeks large male banker (35-45) for lunchtime/office frolics. Tatoos more than welcome. Box 3963.

SERENDIPITY. Box 4063.

ARTIST, MALE, WARM HEARTED, 46, seeks stimulating, possibly exclusively cerebral relationship with vibrant younger woman. Box 4163.

TALL, FIT, LATE 30's man – friendly, articulate and unmarried – seeks dark haired lady 25 to 35. Let's meet North London. Box 4263.

WHERE HAVE THE BORED attractive naughty married men gone? Sensual married woman seeks uncomplicated passionate liaisons. West London. Box 4363.

EASYGOING LAWYER, broad soh, young 34, boyish looks, seeks loyal, slim, lively soulmate, 22 to 34. London Box 4463.

EYE SOLDIER

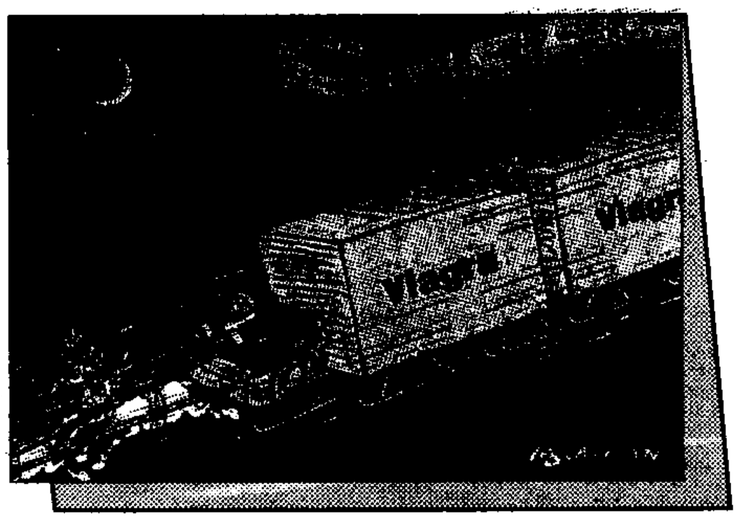
ARMY OFFICER, 30, soon to be a civilian, needs a woman to help remove uniform. Photograph helpful. Box 2163.

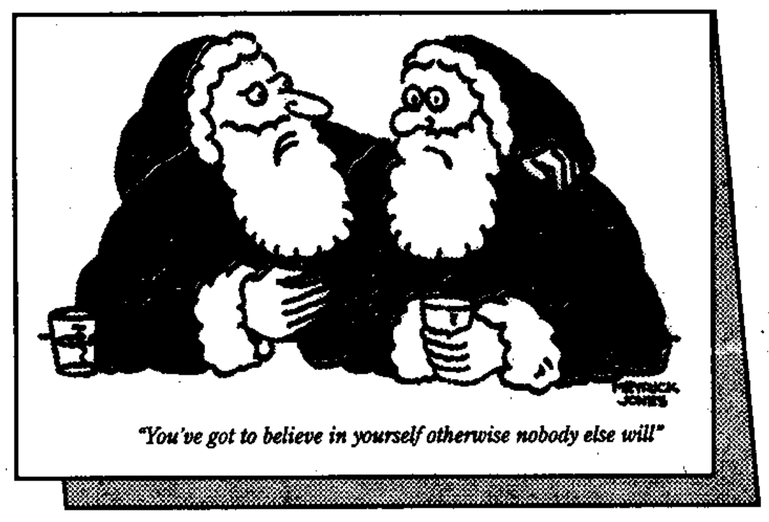
RAMPANT RAMBO requires relief from boredom in desert. Damsels of all ages needed to spice up life and love. ALA. Photo gets mine. Home in new year and – who knows!? Box 2563.

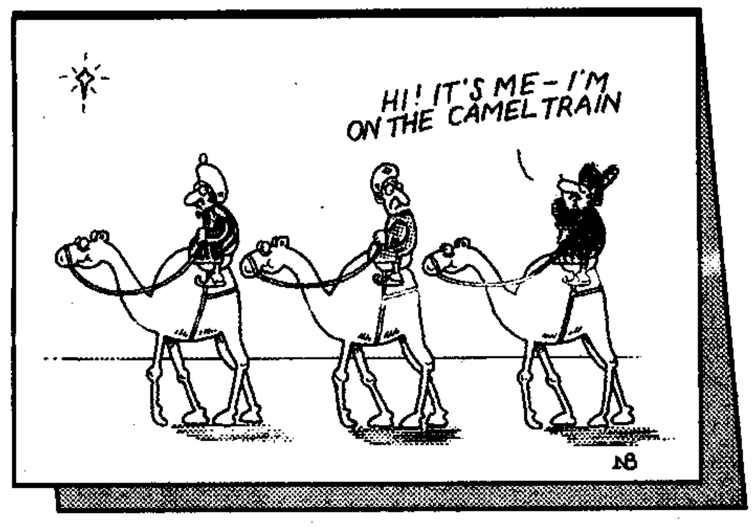
EYE CATCHERS

JONGLEURS, CAMDEN 17.10.98 – late! Forgotten: your e-mail, my phone. Please write Box 4563.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: NOVEMBER 13TH







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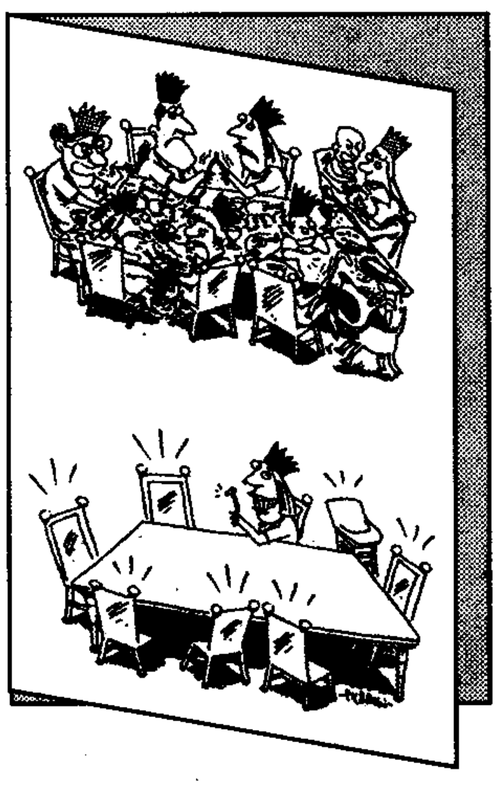

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